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Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	09/14 Mortgage rates top 6%, 1 st time since 2008
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/markets/us/us-mortgage-interest-rates-top-6-first-time-since-2008-2022-09-14/
GIST	<p>Sept 14 (Reuters) - The average interest rate on the most popular U.S. home loan rose above 6% for the first time since 2008 and is now more than double the level it was one year ago, Mortgage Bankers Association (MBA) data showed on Wednesday.</p> <p>Rising mortgage rates are increasingly weighing on the interest-rate sensitive housing sector as the Federal Reserve pushes on with aggressively lifting borrowing costs in order to tame high inflation. The central bank has raised its benchmark overnight lending rate by 225 basis points since March.</p>

	<p>Expectations for Fed tightening have led to a surge in Treasury yields since the start of this year. The yield on the 10-year note acts as a benchmark for mortgage rates.</p> <p>The average contract rate on a 30-year fixed-rate mortgage rose by 7 basis points to 6.01% for the week ended Sept. 9, a level not seen since towards the end of the financial crisis and Great Recession.</p> <p>The MBA also said its Market Composite Index, a measure of mortgage loan application volume, declined 1.2% from a week earlier and is now down 64.0% from one year ago. Its Refinance Index fell 4.2% from the prior week and was down 83.3% compared to one year ago.</p> <p>A worse-than-expected key inflation reading on Tuesday cemented expectations the Fed will be forced to deliver a third straight 75-basis point interest rate hike at its policy meeting next week, with investors now predicting the central bank will have to hike rates faster and further than previously thought.</p> <p>The impact of higher interest rates is being felt across the housing sector. New home sales plunged to a 6-1/2-year low in July while home resales and single-family housing starts are at two-year lows. But house prices remain elevated amid a critical shortage of affordable homes, making a housing market collapse unlikely.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/14 Putin rejected Ukraine peace deal?
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/exclusive-war-began-putin-rejected-ukraine-peace-deal-recommended-by-his-aide-2022-09-14/
GIST	<p>PARIS, Sept 14 (Reuters) - Vladimir Putin's chief envoy on Ukraine told the Russian leader as the war began that he had struck a provisional deal with Kyiv that would satisfy Russia's demand that Ukraine stay out of NATO, but Putin rejected it and pressed ahead with his military campaign, according to three people close to the Russian leadership.</p> <p>The Ukrainian-born envoy, Dmitry Kozak, told Putin that he believed the deal he had hammered out removed the need for Russia to pursue a large-scale occupation of Ukraine, according to these sources. Kozak's recommendation to Putin to adopt the deal is being reported by Reuters for the first time.</p> <p>Putin had repeatedly asserted prior to the war that NATO and its military infrastructure were creeping closer to Russia's borders by accepting new members from eastern Europe, and that the alliance was now preparing to bring Ukraine into its orbit too. Putin publicly said that represented an existential threat to Russia, forcing him to react.</p> <p>But, despite earlier backing the negotiations, Putin made it clear when presented with Kozak's deal that the concessions negotiated by his aide did not go far enough and that he had expanded his objectives to include annexing swathes of Ukrainian territory, the sources said. The upshot: the deal was dropped.</p> <p>Asked about Reuters findings, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said: "That has absolutely no relation to reality. No such thing ever happened. It is absolutely incorrect information."</p> <p>Kozak did not respond to requests for comment sent via the Kremlin.</p> <p>Mykhailo Podolyak, an adviser to the Ukrainian president, said Russia had used the negotiations as a smokescreen to prepare for its invasion, but he did not respond to questions about the substance of the talks nor confirm that a preliminary deal was reached. "Today, we clearly understand that the Russian side has never been interested in a peaceful settlement," Podolyak said.</p> <p>Two of the three sources said a push to get the deal finalized occurred immediately after Russia's Feb. 24 invasion. Within days, Kozak believed he had Ukraine's agreement to the main terms Russia had been seeking and recommended to Putin that he sign an agreement, the sources said.</p>

"After Feb. 24, Kozak was given carte blanche: they gave him the green light; he got the deal. He brought it back and they told him to clear off. Everything was cancelled. Putin simply changed the plan as he went along," said one of the sources close to the Russian leadership.

The third source - who was told about the events by people who were briefed on the discussions between Kozak and Putin - differed on the timing, saying Kozak had proposed the deal to Putin, and had it rejected, just before the invasion. The sources all requested anonymity to share sensitive internal information.

Moscow's offensive in Ukraine is the largest military campaign in Europe since World War II. It prompted sweeping economic sanctions against Russia and military support for Ukraine from Washington and its Western allies.

Even if Putin had acquiesced to Kozak's plan, it remains uncertain if the war would have ended. Reuters was unable to verify independently that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy or senior officials in his government were committed to the deal.

Kozak, who is 63, has been a loyal lieutenant to Putin since working with him in the 1990s in the St. Petersburg mayor's office.

Kozak was well-placed to negotiate a peace deal because since 2020 Putin had tasked him with conducting talks with Ukrainian counterparts about the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine, which has been controlled by Russian-backed separatists following an uprising in 2014. After leading the Russian delegation in talks with Ukrainian officials in Berlin on Feb. 10 – brokered by France and Germany – Kozak told a late-night news conference that the latest round of those negotiations had ended without a breakthrough.

Kozak also was one of those present when, three days before the invasion, Putin gathered his military and security chiefs and key aides in the Kremlin's Yekaterinsky hall for a meeting of Russia's Security Council.

State television cameras recorded part of the meeting, where Putin laid out plans to give formal recognition to separatist entities in eastern Ukraine.

Once the cameras were ushered out of the vast room with its neo-classical columns and domed ceiling, Kozak spoke out against Russia taking any steps to escalate the situation with Ukraine, said two of the three people close to the Russian leadership, as well as a third person who learned about what happened from people who took part in the meeting.

Another individual interviewed by Reuters, who helped in the post-invasion talks, said discussions fell apart in early March when Ukrainian officials understood Putin was committed to pressing ahead with the large-scale invasion.

Six months on from the start of the war, Kozak remains in his post as Kremlin deputy chief of staff. But he is no longer handling the Ukraine dossier, according to six of the sources who spoke to Reuters.

"From what I can see, Kozak is nowhere to be seen," said one of the six, a source close to the separatist leadership in eastern Ukraine.

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HEADLINE	09/13 Russian businessman 9 th mysterious death
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2022/09/13/business/ivan-pechorin-death-russia-intl/index.html
GIST	Russian businessman Ivan Pechorin, the top manager for the Corporation for the Development of the Far East and the Arctic, has been found dead in Vladivostok, the latest in a string of mysterious deaths among Russian executives.

“On September 12, 2022, it became known about the tragic death of our colleague, Ivan Pechorin, Managing Director for the Aviation Industry of the Corporation for the Development of the Far East and the Arctic,” reads a statement from the company published Monday.

“Ivan’s death is an irreparable loss for friends and colleagues, a great loss for the corporation. We offer our sincere condolences to family and friends,” it said.

According to Russian state media outlet RIA Novosti, the administration of Vladivostok said a body was found near the village of Beregovoe. Pechorin drowned on September 10 near Cape Ignatyev in Vladivostok, regional media reports.

At least eight Russian businessmen have died in apparent suicide or accidents in just six months.

Pechorin is at least the ninth prominent Russian businessmen to have reportedly died by suicide or in unexplained accidents since late January, with six of them associated with Russia’s two largest energy companies.

Four of those six were linked to the Russian state-owned energy giant Gazprom or one of its subsidiaries, while the other two were associated with Lukoil, Russia’s largest privately owned oil and gas company.

Earlier this year, the company took the unusual public stance of speaking out against Russia’s war in Ukraine, calling for sympathy for the victims, and for the end of the conflict.

Lukoil’s chairman Ravil Maganov died at the beginning of September after falling out of the window of a hospital in Moscow, according to Russian state news agency TASS.

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HEADLINE	09/13 Wanted: teachers. No training necessary
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2022/09/13/teacher-requirements-shortage-jobs/
GIST	<p>When students returned to class this year, a growing number of them were greeted by adults with no teacher training and, in some cases, no more than a high school diploma.</p> <p>States desperate to fill teaching jobs have relaxed job requirements. Public officials are openly challenging the idea that a degree in education should be a prerequisite for getting into the classroom and are aiming to undo long-standing license rules. Some states now permit people to teach without finishing college in certain cases, and many increasingly rely on substitutes — who are usually not required to have college degrees — to fill teaching jobs full-time.</p> <p>The pandemic created staffing crises in many schools. In other places, such as Oklahoma and Arizona, those crises existed long before 2020, driven in part by low teacher pay, cuts to school spending and less interest in the teaching profession.</p> <p>The moves to address those problems today come as right-wing politicians paint schools and universities as bastions of liberal ideology. Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis (R), who had previously called a college degree “a magic piece of paper which likely would have cost too much anyway.” recently introduced programs to put community college graduates and military veterans in classrooms with mentor teachers.</p> <p>“The teachers that become great teachers don’t become great teachers because they’re sitting in some university lecture hall listening to some professor bloviate,” DeSantis said when he announced an initiative to allow community college graduates to teach under a mentor teacher for two years. “What makes a teacher great is actually being there, doing it, watching experienced teachers and seeing what they do that works, working directly with students.”</p> <p>Many states have loosened job criteria over the years to draw more people into the teaching profession. In 2019, only 15 states required that candidates pass a basic skills test — which measures whether they have</p>

a grasp of math, reading and writing — according to a report from the National Council on Teacher Quality. Many states allow people to work on short-term licenses while they are still in teacher preparation programs. In the pandemic, more states loosened requirements, some just temporarily.

Critics of these moves worry about the consequences of putting adults without proper training in front of students at a time when school closures have cratered academic outcomes. Research from the Economic Policy Institute shows that [high-poverty schools have less-experienced and less-qualified teachers](#) than wealthier ones and that teacher shortages are more acute in high-poverty schools.

“So we put our least prepared, least qualified, least experienced teachers into the schools where students need the most,” said Heather Peske, the president of the National Council on Teacher Quality. She said states have been eroding prerequisites for years, with many doing away with requirements for exams that test whether aspiring educators actually know the material they want to teach. “When we do this, we ignore in the research on how you should teach kids specific skills like reading or early numeracy or the knowledge base that exists for successfully serving students.”

School officials say emergency-certified teachers need far more support than other first-year educators and are often surprised at how difficult and time-consuming the work can be. They underestimate how technology has changed school, and how less-than-intuitive skills, such as managing Google Classroom, are now necessities.

“There’s that old saying that everyone thinks they know everything about schools because they’ve been to school,” said Chris LeGrande, the principal of Guthrie High outside Oklahoma City. He has managed emergency-certified teachers who did not know how to plan lessons that filled class time and left students to their own devices if their lessons ended early. “I see a lot of kids on phones,” he said, “which I consider wasted instructional time, which ultimately is not beneficial to our students.”

Florida — where shortages in some places are acute and where teachers labor under a raft of recently passed laws that restrict how they talk about race and sex education — has boosted teacher pay. It also introduced an initiative that will permit military veterans to teach alongside a credentialed teacher for two years and then lead classes alone, provided they’ve served four years of active duty, acquired 60 college credits, and enter a five-year teacher’s license program. As of Friday, 341 people had applied to participate in the program.

Arizona’s state board of education voted this year to permit substitute teachers, who need only a high school diploma, to serve as full-time classroom teachers for an entire school year in response to its state staffing pinch. Under a law passed this year, it also allows those earning bachelor’s degrees to teach with the guidance of a mentor for two years.

“Schools are struggling to find substitute teachers, which is causing learning disruptions for students and placing pressure on teachers and administrators,” [the board members wrote](#).

Paul Tighe recently left his job as the superintendent of the Saddle Mountain Unified School District on the outskirts of Phoenix. During his tenure, he said, it became so difficult to find qualified teachers that an elementary school ended up hiring two parents who were working on their education degrees to teach elementary school classes by themselves. The term “substitute teacher” has become a misnomer at many Arizona schools, because many [end up](#) teaching full-time to fill vacancies, instead of being a backup for teachers who are out.

“We basically gave them on-the-job student teaching,” Tighe said.

Oklahoma has introduced an “adjunct teacher” program that allows school boards to hire anyone who passes a background check as a teacher, so long as state education officials also sign off. According to John Waldron, a state lawmaker who represents Tulsa, there have been 248 applications for adjunct teachers this year.

Oklahoma state Sen. Jessica Garvin (R) said she believes teacher preparation is important, but she also thought the state's requirements were too rigid — and were excluding people in other careers who had the potential to be great teachers. So she introduced a bill to expand the program, which previously permitted such candidates to work only part-time.

She was partly inspired, she said, by her doctor, who told her he was working on getting his teaching credentials so he could teach anatomy at a local high school. She was shocked that he needed a credential. "I was like 'You could amputate my leg, but you can't go teach anatomy?'" Garvin said. "I just felt like that was so restrictive."

The program has no minimum requirements. Garvin said she trusts that school boards will be prudent in whom they hire.

Waldron, a former history teacher now serving as a state representative, worries that desperate school districts will hire people unfit to be in classrooms. Waldron ran for office in 2018 after budget cuts and low teacher pay prompted a statewide teacher walkout that eventually led state lawmakers to increase education funding and raise teacher salaries. It has done little to stem the shortage, Waldron said.

"We hit rock bottom, broke through and found a whole new bottom," Waldron said of the new teacher adjunct law.

Oklahoma, which has long contended with acute teacher shortages, passed a law a little more than a decade ago permitting districts that had exhausted all means of finding qualified educators to get an "emergency certification" for anyone who held a college degree, even if the person had no training.

It was meant to be a stopgap in extraordinary circumstances — in the program's first year the state issued 32 licenses — but the emergency seems never to have ended. Last school year, the state board of education [issued more than 3,600 emergency teaching licenses](#), a record, according to KOSU, an NPR affiliate in the state. It is on track this year to break that record, increasing the proportion of untrained educators among the state's 45,000-member teaching corps.

At a roundtable with reporters last week, U.S. Education Secretary Miguel Cardona said that to draw people into the teaching profession — and to retain them — working conditions need to improve. He listed the challenges facing teachers: They feel under attack, micromanaged and disrespected; they are not given the resources they need to help their students succeed; and they sometimes have to take on second jobs just to make ends meet.

"Better working condition also means that we revisit normalizing that teachers could work in classrooms that are 95 degrees all day with a class of 27 students," Cardona said. "If we're serious about lifting the profession, if we're serious about lifting education, we must invest in our educators."

In [a letter to school leaders in December](#), Cardona spelled out ways for schools to recruit and retain teachers, including using coronavirus relief funds to boost teacher compensation, focusing on the well-being of staffers and bringing more people into the profession by covering the cost of their teacher preparation courses in exchange for a commitment to teach in a district. He also urged states to set up teaching apprenticeships — programs that pay for aspiring teachers' education and allows them to work and be paid while they earn their degrees.

But nowhere in the seven-page letter did he suggest doing away with job requirements.

"When the nation's report card is showing that our students have dropped drastically — to provide educators who are not qualified or trained in the pedagogy of teaching is a slap in the face to the profession," Cardona said.

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SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/13/long-term-military-investment-proposed-as-alternative-to-ukraine-joining-nato
GIST	<p>Ukraine's allies should commit to legally binding large-scale weapons transfers and multi-decade investment in the country's defences, according to a report that looked at alternatives to Kyiv's long-term aspirations to join the Nato alliance.</p> <p>The report was commissioned by the Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, and co-authored by the former Nato secretary general, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, and Zelenskiy's chief of staff, Andrey Yermak.</p> <p>The purpose of the report was to provide a security structure for Ukraine that guarantees Russia does not seek to invade again, and is separate from calls by Zelenskiy for the west to step up arms supplies to drive home the sudden advance by Ukrainian troops.</p> <p>Ukraine's possible future membership in Nato was one of the issues that Russia claimed as justification for its February invasion.</p> <p>The report, the subject of wide diplomatic consultations, does not propose that Nato countries collectively should be required to offer their troops in defence of Ukraine's sovereignty, but says there should be no restriction on the military diplomatic and economic help provided by Nato member countries through bilateral agreements. The level of support could be scalable according to the level of threat and should apply to all of Ukraine's internationally recognised borders.</p> <p>The report argues the "strongest security guarantee for Ukraine lies in its capacity to defend itself against an aggressor ... To do so, Ukraine needs the resources to maintain a significant defensive force capable of withstanding the Russian Federation's armed forces and paramilitaries.</p> <p>"This requires a multi-decade effort of sustained investment in Ukraine's defence industrial base, scalable weapons transfers and intelligence support from allies, intensive training missions and joint exercises under the European Union and Nato flags".</p> <p>A core group of allied countries that will be brought together with Ukraine includes the US, UK, Canada, Poland, Italy, Germany, France, Australia, Turkey, and Nordic, Baltic, central and eastern European countries.</p> <p>The military guarantees might provide commitments to Ukraine that amount to "a closed sky" through the provision of anti-aircraft and anti-missile defence equipment.</p> <p>The guarantees, the report suggests, should not require Ukraine to limit the size or strength of its armed forces, or to adopt a position of neutrality, but it would require Ukraine to remain on a democratic path.</p> <p>Critics of the report will question the enforceability of the proposed legal guarantees, the scale of financial support required, and the threat that such a powerful army might not only act in self-defence.</p> <p>Ukrainian forces will be trained to Nato standard and at the scale needed to build a robust territorial defence force and reserve force, including a form of conscription for those civilians aged over 18. The training activities will be supported by an extensive exercise programme both on Ukrainian soil and with Ukrainian forces on EU or Nato territory.</p> <p>Non-Nato countries such as South Korea might provide non-military guarantees such as a commitment to sanctions in the event of a further Russian attack. A legal framework should be developed that will allow authorities to seize the property of the aggressor, its sovereign funds and reserves, and the assets of its citizens and entities on the sanctions list.</p> <p>Sanctions would not be lifted until Russia stops its aggression against Ukraine, guarantees it will not attack Ukraine in the future, and compensates Ukraine for the damages caused during the invasion.</p>

	<p>Rasmussen said: “Once this war is over, we must ensure that Russia can never invade again. The best way to do that is by Ukraine having a significant military force capable of withstanding any future Russian attack. Building and maintaining such a force requires a multi-decade commitment from Ukraine’s allies.</p> <p>“Adopting these recommendations would send a strong signal to Vladimir Putin. It would show that our commitment to Ukraine will not falter, that his war is futile”.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/13 Ukraine economy resilient: stabilizes
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/ukraine-economy-stabilizes-military-gains-11663078436?mod=hp_lead_pos6
GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine—At Nova Poshta, Ukraine’s equivalent of FedEx, deliveries are back to 90% of their prewar level of a million parcels a day.</p> <p>After Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February, Nova Poshta’s revenues fell to 2% of the prewar level. “I thought our company could disappear,” said co-owner Vyacheslav Klimov. But as spring progressed, e-commerce and business activity resumed in areas away from the front lines, and many factories switched to supplying the military. “It means we’re profitable and even have some money for future investments,” he said.</p> <p>Ukraine’s economy, while hurting, is stabilizing after the deep crash set off by the war, thanks to a combination of quick policy actions, military resilience and the flexible response of Ukrainian businesses to the damage and dislocation. The uptick is boosting morale in the country along with recent combat breakthroughs in the east after months on the defensive.</p> <p>Early this year, as Russian forces threatened the capital Kyiv, it looked like Ukraine’s economy might collapse, with gross domestic product for the year projected to fall by as much as half. It is still expected to be down about 30%, but summer saw a rebound from the depths of last spring.</p> <p>“Things are bad but stable,” said Tymofiy Mylovanov, head of the Kyiv School of Economics. “It looks and feels like the economy is adapting.”</p> <p>A major factor is military: Russia’s retreat from the area around Kyiv, the slow progress of its subsequent offensives and Ukraine’s recent counterattacks have created enough certainty for economic activity to resume in the unoccupied part of Ukraine. The Ukrainian army’s success in recent days in driving Russian forces out of the eastern Kharkiv region has shown how Ukraine has seized the strategic initiative and put Russia on the back foot, raising hopes that more territory will be liberated before winter and that Russia will struggle to resume the offensive.</p> <p>“If you’re 50 or 100 kilometers from the front line, there are missiles but you don’t fear the Russians will be here tomorrow,” said Mr. Mylovanov.</p> <p>Ukraine’s central bank and Finance Ministry also took swift steps, using a playbook drawn from earlier crises, that economists say helped to prevent a bigger disaster.</p> <p>The National Bank of Ukraine imposed capital controls and pegged Ukraine’s currency, the hryvnia, to the dollar at a level that didn’t allow import costs and inflation to skyrocket. The bank had to devalue the hryvnia in July when it came under too much pressure, but the new rate has held so far.</p> <p>The central bank, despite misgivings, printed money to keep the government solvent at a time when international markets wouldn’t lend and tax revenues were evaporating. “At the beginning of the war we understood it is impossible to conduct our monetary policy as before,” said Sergiy Nikolaychuk, deputy governor of the National Bank of Ukraine.</p>

The government temporarily slashed business taxes and suspended sales taxes and import duties, providing a fiscal stimulus and easing imports of consumer goods during the darkest hour. Kyiv has gradually restored taxes as economic activity has stabilized.

Russian efforts against vital systems such as banks and the internet have been largely ineffective, and they have continued to function.

Russian bombs destroyed most of Igor Liski's wood-processing factory west of Kyiv this spring. He decided to rebuild it to set an example of resistance. It will be operating at nearly full capacity by fall, he said.

"I believe victory will depend on the economy," said the 43-year-old entrepreneur. "Ukraine needs companies to give work, pay taxes, export products. All companies who can, should produce."

Despite the recent gains, the economic blow has been severe. Russian troops have seized some of the heartlands of Ukrainian industry and agriculture; blockaded the Black Sea ports that Ukrainian exports rely on; and bombed factories, oil refineries and other infrastructure. Millions of Ukrainians have become refugees inside the country and across Europe, and unemployment is declining slowly from a peak of 35%.

Russian missiles continue to strike, and winter will bring new difficulties, including the sky-high cost of heating and fears of natural-gas shortages. In recent days, Russian strikes against power stations, which have caused temporary outages in several cities, are a warning that Moscow will try to target Ukraine's electricity and heating infrastructure.

Ukraine's Western allies, especially the European Union, are lagging in sending promised financing for the government's huge budget deficit, leaving Kyiv dangerously reliant on money-printing by the central bank. That has contributed to inflation of over 20%.

"It's crucial for the resilience of Ukraine that we get the funding that was committed from our international partners," said Yuriy Vitrenko, chief executive of the national oil-and-gas company Naftogaz.

But determination not to go under is evident across the country, and many Ukrainian businesses are finding workarounds for missile threats, blocked logistics, shortages and scattered workforces. "Motivation and truth are on our side," said Mr. Liski. "If we survive also on the economic side, definitely we will win the war."

Mr. Liski built his first businesses in Luhansk in eastern Ukraine. He lost them all in Russia's covert invasion of the region in 2014. He moved to Kyiv and built up new ventures in industry and agriculture, ranging from wood-processing to honey-making. His company, a private-equity fund called Effective Investments Group, uses foreign capital raised from Europe and North America.

He is pitching a proposal to the government for an insurance fund involving international insurers that protects investments against military risk to spur rebuilding now despite the continuing war.

Ukraine's economy suffered a deep depression in the 1990s after the collapse of Communism. Later, a series of shocks set the country back, from the 2008 global financial crisis to Russia's 2014 seizure of Crimea and part of Ukraine's east. Ukrainians watched while neighbors such as Poland and Romania joined the EU and grew rapidly. Ukraine's aspirations for deeper economic ties with the West, and Moscow's resistance, were among the causes of the conflict.

Ukraine's economy was improving before Russia's invasion this year. Many Ukrainians say the latest economic shock is still better than the one in the 1990s, when employers couldn't pay wages and mass hardship swept the country. Many also say experience has engendered a mentality of inventive self-reliance.

“We are well-trained in recovering from all types of crises,” said Mariya Masliy, a shoe designer from Kyiv. “Crisis management is the norm since we were born.”

Ms. Masliy has switched from designing high heels to army boots with Kevlar protection. The factory she works with in Kharkiv was bombed; it has restarted production in safer western Ukraine. Currently a refugee in Amsterdam, she has carved out a new Dutch export market for her fashion brand, Marsala. “A Dutch friend told me, ‘You, Ukrainians, are all so active, you don’t sit around in depression,’” she said.

Energy crisis

The invasion threatened to cut off Ukraine’s access to gasoline, diesel and crude oil, which came overland from Russia and from Belarus, a Russian ally, or from the blockaded Black Sea. Russian missiles also destroyed Ukraine’s main oil refineries and major fuel depots.

Executives from Ukraine’s gas-station operators, led by major networks OKKO and WOG, traveled frantically around the EU, buying up new supplies of gasoline and diesel. They had to pay cash up front, sometimes a month in advance, to European suppliers that didn’t like the risk of dealing with a country being invaded.

Importing fuel by train was difficult, because Ukrainian railroads have a wider gauge than the EU’s. At the Polish-Ukrainian border, fuel had to be siphoned out of EU-standard trains and pumped into Ukrainian wagons. “It isn’t easy or quick,” said Vasyl Danylyak, CEO of OKKO.

In April, Ukraine imported about 200,000 metric tons of fuel, compared with a million tons a month before the war. Mile-long lines of cars were a common sight at Ukrainian gas stations. The government relaxed fuel-price controls to help importers cover higher logistics costs. Gas-station networks bought fuel from all over the world, except Russia, bringing it in by road, rail and river. By July, imports were back up to 770,000 tons. It was enough to meet demand, and lines at gas stations disappeared.

The fuel companies operate without large depots because of missile attacks. WOG keeps less than \$3 million of gasoline in any one place, to keep the target’s value below the cost of Russian missiles.

A deal brokered by Turkey to reopen the Black Sea for limited grain exports is giving partial relief to Ukrainian agriculture and world food markets—although Russia has threatened to curtail the shipments. But heavy industry is still struggling without sea access.

Ukraine’s biggest steel plant, the ArcelorMittal steel mill in Kryviy Rih, is producing at about 20% of its prewar volume. The mill has switched to sending steel westward to the EU via road and rail. But without ports, it can’t import enough coking coal to Kryviy Rih, limiting how much iron ore it can process.

“You solve one bottleneck and you find another,” said Mauro Longobardo, an Italian who heads the Ukraine operations of the Luxembourg-based multinational. Low volume and expensive logistics mean the plant is losing money. It has cut wages and will need to cut jobs if the situation doesn’t improve. “If we reduce people, this city hurts like hell,” he said.

The gritty steel town of Kryviy Rih, about 40 miles from the front-line fighting in south Ukraine, holds symbolic importance for both sides: It is the hometown of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. The steel mill helped defend it early in the invasion when a Russian armored column came within less than 10 miles by giving the Ukrainian army several giant mining trucks to block the road into town. The Russian armored vehicles couldn’t use the soggy ground around the obstacle, came under fire and retreated, a strategic setback for Russia’s campaign in the south.

Parcel delivery

Service sectors are faring better, despite challenges. Nova Poshta, the parcel-delivery company, struggled through the springtime gasoline shortages. In Kharkiv, Russian shelling killed people queuing at a branch for humanitarian packages. Sorting centers in Kharkiv, Chernihiv and Mykolaiv were also bombed.

“We began rebuilding the sorting centers within hours. Now you can’t see the damage,” said Mr. Klimov. Out of 30,000 prewar employees, about 2,700 have joined the military. The company laid off about 1,500 people, mainly in Russian-held areas where it can’t operate.

Signs of recovery in Ukraine’s job market began soon after Russian forces retreated from Kyiv. Vacancies on Work.ua, Ukraine’s biggest employment website, reached more than 40,000 on a given day in August, compared with 6,000 in March. That compares with more than 100,000 vacancies in February, before the invasion.

Vacancies show the geographical shift taking place in Ukraine’s economy, said Artur Mikhno, Work.ua’s CEO. Jobs are being created disproportionately in Lviv and other cities in Ukraine’s safer west, and he said far fewer employers are hiring in eastern cities such as Kharkiv, which Russia continues to target from afar.

Work.ua is part of the burgeoning tech scene in Dnipro, an industrial city in central Ukraine. Other IT clusters have emerged in Kyiv and Lviv. Exports of IT services were up 23% in the first half of 2022 compared with a year earlier.

“We’re at war with a country with nuclear weapons and companies are still able to grow their business,” said Alexander Kholodov, founder of Dnipro-based software company Yalantis.

Many people are supporting the national defense and economy however they can.

Before the war, Petro Hryhoriev’s main business was an 84-acre asparagus farm in the southern Kherson region. Russian troops now occupy it. Some of Mr. Hryhoriev’s workers are now refugees in Europe, and others are in Kherson but uncontactable. He is still wiring them their salaries, using the farm’s financial reserves and the profits from two cafes he opened this year in Dnipro. He has donated body armor, helmets, medicine and two cars to the army. He said he firmly believes Kherson will be liberated and he will see his farm again.

On a summer evening in Dnipro, Mr. Hryhoriev’s cafes were lively, and young people drank and talked on the waterfront until the midnight wartime curfew. The city of over a million on the banks of the wide Dnipro River has suffered less bombing than cities nearer the front line and has become a haven for many displaced people.

“We’re trying to live a full life,” Mr. Hryhoriev said. “Everyone wants their life back.”

Among the Soviet-era high-rise blocks of eastern Kyiv, Maksym Pustakov is starting to rebuild the food-kiosk business he lost in Mariupol, the port city destroyed in one of the most brutal episodes of Russia’s invasion.

After fleeing Mariupol with his wife and son and reaching Kyiv, Mr. Pustakov said he shut his eyes and tapped on his mobile phone’s banking app. Opening his eyes, he was relieved to see his bank was still working and his money was all there. He decided to open up a new shawarma kiosk in Troieshchyna, a tough working-class suburb of the capital. All their employees are fellow refugees from Mariupol.

“We didn’t want to wait for something to happen. We are not that sort of people. We decided to act,” he said. The outlet took off, and Mr. Pustakov is already expanding it and planning a second. His ambition, he said, is to build a chain across Ukraine.

HEADLINE	09/13 Incomes fail to grow 2 nd year in row
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-incomes-were-flat-last-year-census-figures-show-11663079099?mod=hp_lead_pos4
GIST	<p>Americans as a whole have experienced two years in a row of flat or declining household income, new government data showed Tuesday, reflecting the pandemic's lingering economic pain as inflation is also taking the largest bite out of pocketbooks in four decades.</p> <p>In its annual assessment of the nation's financial well-being, the Census Bureau said median household income of about \$70,800 in 2021 wasn't different in a statistically significant way from the inflation-adjusted 2020 estimate of about \$71,200.</p> <p>The lack of any real growth for 2021 follows a decrease in incomes recorded in 2020, the first year of the pandemic. Totals in 2020 and 2021 were boosted by significant government spending in response to the pandemic that helped reduce poverty.</p> <p>The report, which offers insight into how households fared during the pandemic's second year, arrives ahead of a midterm election where inflation and the economy are expected to be top issues.</p> <p>The Labor Department said in a separate report Tuesday that the consumer-price index, a measure of what consumers pay for goods and services, rose 8.3% in August from the same month a year earlier, down from 8.5% in July.</p> <p>The road ahead for the U.S. economy remains uncertain, with the Federal Reserve aggressively raising interest rates while trying not to trigger a recession. Supply-chain delays and a lack of workers continue to challenge economic growth.</p> <p>"In our view, the combination of continued Fed tightening and elevated inflation, which has caused real personal income to contract in recent quarters, will lead to retrenchment in real consumer spending beginning in the first quarter of 2023," said Tim Quinlan, a senior economist at Wells Fargo & Co. "Despite a slight softening in the sting of inflation giving way to an improvement in purchasing power, households continue to rely on their balance sheets to spend."</p> <p>The Census Bureau said incomes were highest in the West (about \$79,400) and Northeast (about \$77,500), followed by the Midwest (about \$71,100) and the South (about \$63,400).</p> <p>The report uses amounts that its survey respondents said they received in 2021. To allow for comparisons, amounts reported in earlier years are adjusted upward to reflect inflation since those years.</p> <p>The bureau said the official poverty rate in 2021 was 11.6%, or about 37.9 million people living in poverty. Neither the rate nor the total was statistically different from 2020. For a four-person household, the threshold for meeting the definition of poverty was about \$27,740 in 2021.</p> <p>The official poverty measure doesn't reflect how much a household pays in taxes, and it also omits noncash government aid such as tax credits, housing subsidies and free school lunches. A broader measure that accounts for such expenses and aid fell last year to 7.8%, a drop of 1.4 percentage points from 2020. The rate was the lowest since the measure was introduced in 2009.</p> <p>The unofficial poverty rate also fell sharply for children, dropping to 5.2% from 9.7%, reflecting the effect of an expanded child tax credit. Various tax credits lifted 9.6 million people of all ages above the poverty line last year, according to Liana Fox, assistant division chief for social and economic statistics.</p> <p>One group that saw a slight uptick in poverty was those 65 and older. "A larger share are on fixed income and I think one thing that's very likely happening is that they are on fixed incomes that aren't keeping pace with inflation," Ms. Fox said.</p>

The bureau said the proportion of Americans with health insurance for some or all of 2021 was 91.7%, up 0.4% from 2020. About 27.2 million Americans didn't have health insurance during any part of 2021, according to the survey.

Earnings—mostly wages and salaries—showed a mixed picture. Median earnings in 2021 for all workers rose 4.6% to about \$45,500 from the previous year. However, among workers who worked full time, year-round, median earnings dropped 4.1% to about \$56,500. The report said the decline could be due in part to gains by lower-paid workers or the effects of inflation. The total number of workers remained about the same at about 168 million, but the number of full-time, year-round workers grew by 11 million to 117 million.

The 2021 female-to-male earnings ratio among full-time, year-round workers was 84%, not significantly different from 2020.

“Asian households had the highest median income in 2021, followed by non-Hispanic white households and Hispanic households,” Ms. Fox said. “Black households had the lowest median income. None of these estimates were statistically different from 2020.”

Overall, income shifted toward higher-income households. The Gini index, a summary measure of how incomes are distributed, rose 1.2% from 2020, the first significant year-over-year increase since 2011. For example, a household at the 90th income percentile received 13.5 times as much as one at the 10th percentile, compared with 12.9 times as much in 2020.

Using other measures, the bureau attributed the shift to falling incomes among lower-income households rather than major gains by upper-income households.

The top fifth of households—with incomes above about \$149,100—collected 52.7% of household income, while the top 5% alone—with incomes above about \$286,300—collected 23.5%. The lowest fifth of households—making less than about \$28,000—collected 2.9%. The second fifth—with incomes from about \$28,000 to \$55,000—collected 8%.

The report focuses on pretax income of all kinds, including cash forms of government aid like unemployment compensation, but it doesn't include last year's stimulus checks and beefed-up tax credits. Using an alternate calculation that included such income as well as taxes paid, the bureau found that median household income fell 1% last year, a change that it said wasn't statistically significant.

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HEADLINE	09/13 Bellevue as a testing area self-driving cars
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3633953/kiro-newsradio-headlines-bellevue-to-be-testing-ground-for-self-driving-cars/
GIST	<p>You might have to keep a keen eye open soon if you are driving in Bellevue as a tech giant is bringing autonomous vehicles to the area for testing and chose the region for its rainy conditions.</p> <p>The Puget Sound Business Journal reports Alphabet Inc.'s self-driving project, Waymo, will be testing electric Jaguar I-Pace vehicles over the next few months.</p> <p>The company said it chose the region because the driving environment was similar in certain respects to other western U.S. cities.</p> <p>So if you see a Jaguar with a driver not touching the steering wheel, you'll know what that's about.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/14 EU pushes emergency energy measures
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/09/14/eu-emergency-energy-measures-russia-ukraine/

BRUSSELS — The European Commission will push ahead with emergency measures to tackle the energy crisis, including a windfall tax on some energy companies and binding targets to reduce consumption during peak hours, a sign of growing concern that the fallout from Russia's war in Ukraine is pushing the region toward recession.

The plan, outlined in European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen's annual State of the European Union address on Wednesday, comes after weeks of debate about the best way to tackle high energy prices. Von der Leyen said that, in addition the emergency measures, Brussels is working to overhaul its energy markets to break the "dominant influence" of the price of natural gas on electricity costs.

Von der Leyen predicted that the escalating energy war with Russia would test the E.U. through the months ahead "This is not only a war unleashed by Russia against Ukraine. This is a war on our energy, a war on our economy, a war on our values and a war on our future," she told members of European Parliament.

She said Russia is "actively manipulating" the bloc's energy market to the point that it is no longer functioning, but Europe was fighting back. "I stand here with the conviction that with courage and solidarity, Putin will fail and Europe will prevail," she said.

The annual speech comes more than six months after Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, upending Europe's post-Cold War security architecture and its energy strategy. The 27-member bloc moved with uncommon speed and unity, pulling together to hit the Kremlin with unprecedented sanctions and offering financial and military support to Ukraine.

But the European Union's efforts to hit Russia's war machine have accelerated Europe's energy and cost-of-living crisis, sending the price of electricity, as well as food and other essentials, way up. There is a growing fear that Europe is heading for a recession that could lead to social unrest in the region and ripple around the world.

In recent weeks, E.U. officials have held urgent meetings on measures to control the price of electricity and stabilize power markets, with the commission floating a range of ideas that would have once been considered extreme. The European Central Bank [raised interest rates](#) last week for the second time this year in a bid to cool off inflation without pushing the economy over the edge.

The White House is [watching the situation closely](#). Aides to President Biden have been reviewing their efforts to export liquefied natural gas to Europe, to determine whether there's any additional way for American producers to help. In a [visit to Brussels last week](#), Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the U.S. will not "leave our European friends out in the cold."

Since February, the European Union has taken steps to wean itself off Russian energy in the name of limiting Russian revenue and loosening the Kremlin's grip on Europe. To some extent, it appears to be working.

Russian pipeline gas now makes up just 9 percent of E.U. gas imports, for instance, not the 40 percent it was at the beginning of the year. The E.U. [reached its goal](#) last week to get gas stores to more than 80 percent capacity well before the weather turns in November. In the short term, however, prices remain high and national governments are paying hundreds of billions to try to keep people afloat.

Von der Leyen said the measures the commission will propose could generate \$140 billion to "cushion the blow" of high prices.

"In our social market economy, profits are good. But in these times it is wrong to receive extraordinary record profits benefiting from war and on the back of consumers," she said. "In these times, profits must be shared and channeled to those who need it the most."

	She also said that reducing electricity demand in peak our will bring prices down. More details on the commission's proposals are expected later Wednesday.
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HEADLINE	09/13 Putin pursues war 'goals'; refuses to lose
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/09/13/putin-war-ukraine-russia-retreat/
GIST	<p>Vladimir Putin's definitive quality as president — his refusal ever to back down — helped him project Russian global power for years. But amid repeated setbacks in a catastrophic war in Ukraine, his inflexible approach is looking more like his great flaw.</p> <p>As Russian forces fled in disarray in Ukraine's Kharkiv region Saturday — dressing as civilians, stealing bicycles, abandoning tons of military equipment and ammunition — Putin sounded strikingly tone deaf as he opened a giant new Ferris wheel in Moscow. "There is nothing like that in Europe," he boasted via video-link.</p> <p>Within hours, the Ferris wheel had broken down, and tickets had to be refunded. Repairing what's broken about Putin's war strategy and, by extension, his presidency and reputation, will be far harder.</p> <p>Ukraine's northeastern counteroffensive was underway even as Putin, at a conference in the Far East days earlier, insisted that Russia had "lost nothing and will lose nothing" in the war, a remark that seemed oblivious to Russia's repeated setbacks and shockingly high casualties, and ignorant of what was transpiring on the battlefield.</p> <p>Putin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, said on Monday that the war "will continue until the goals that have been set are achieved." What those goals are, however, is difficult to know. Putin's initial goal, of capturing Kyiv and topping Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's government, failed.</p> <p>Now, Western intelligence and military analysts argue Russia is unlikely to achieve its presumed fallback goal of conquering all of Donetsk and Luhansk in eastern Ukraine.</p> <p>Presuming that Putin's goal involves being able to declare victory in some form, the messy Russian retreat from Kharkiv — what Moscow called a "regroup" — now leaves the 69-year-old president with stark and shrinking choices.</p> <p>He could scale-up and announce a politically risky national mandatory military mobilization — something Peskov on Tuesday denied was even under discussion. He could grind on, plowing in poorly trained and increasingly de-motivated soldiers, and carrying out brutal artillery attacks on towns and cities to terrorize the Ukrainian population.</p> <p>Or, he could escalate in some extreme fashion, as some of Putin's fiercest critics fear, turning to chemical or even nuclear weapons.</p> <p>So far, Putin has done everything he can to avoid mandatory mobilization, which risks triggering wider public opposition to the war — even though many Russian military experts believe there is no other way to defeat Ukraine militarily.</p> <p>And while deploying a weapon of mass destruction cannot be ruled out, many experts play down fears of Putin doing so, because it would destroy his dwindling international support with crucial partners like China and India, and because it would undermine his efforts to convey a sense of normalcy to Russians.</p> <p>If Putin sticks to his habit of refusing to back down, analysts say, he is most likely to grind on.</p> <p>"Vladimir Putin certainly has the will to continue this war, but he has been largely operating under the illusion that the Russian military was winning and would eventually win," said Michael Kofman, director of Russian studies at Arlington-based Center for Naval Analyses, or CNA.</p>

“The question is, is he willing to take the political risk to try to salvage the Russian military effort in this war?” Kofman said, referring to mandatory mobilization.

“Many Russians have been fairly lukewarm in terms of either supporting or not caring about this war, seeing their lives as largely unaffected because they believe that their kids will not be sent to fight,” Kofman added. “People’s attitudes really change if they think their kids will be sent to fight.”

Nor is either side ready to discuss peace. Dmitry Medvedev, Russian deputy head of the Security Council, said Monday the war would not end without Kyiv’s “total capitulation.”

Meanwhile, Zelensky speaks with increasing boldness about taking back not only all of the eastern Donbas region, but also Crimea, which Russia annexed illegally in 2014.

But grinding on poses its own risks to Putin, who is coming under increasing pressure and scrutiny despite a Kremlin crackdown on criticism of the war.

After Russia admitted the retreat Saturday, Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov suggested that Putin might not be aware of the mistakes that had been made, and would have to call the president himself to discuss the situation. Peskov on Monday insisted Putin is fully briefed.

The Russian Defense Ministry claimed Saturday that the “regrouping” took place without a single loss for Russia, and with some 4,000 Ukrainians killed, assertions not supported by the facts.

That night, as fireworks burst across the capital in celebration of Moscow City Day, the hard-line pro-war faction, aware of the actual scale of the losses, was livid. They demanded harsher military action, the targeting of civilian infrastructure and mandatory military mobilization.

Meanwhile opposition deputies in 35 municipalities signed calls in recent days for Putin to be removed, a rare sign of symbolic public dissent. They now are likely to face tough consequences.

Most ordinary Russians, no longer paying much attention to the war, were probably unaware of the big retreat, analysts said. But if Russia faces more setbacks, the outrage from pro-war hard-liners could sharpen, public awareness would rise and, with it, pressure on Putin.

With complaints about the “difficulties” and “mistakes” being voiced on state television and by prominent figures like Kadyrov, it is becoming harder to maintain the Kremlin line that everything is going according to plan.

Putin, however, seems to be stubbornly sticking to the same strategy, banking on his conviction that Western support for Ukraine will crumble, forcing Ukraine to capitulate in time. This already seems to be backfiring, with Ukraine’s recent gains capturing imaginations, reinforcing support for Kyiv.

In some ways, Putin is a victim of his own policies. The Kremlin for years has fostered a large group of politically apathetic citizens, making it difficult now to take firmer steps to win the war, such as mobilization, which require patriotic fervor to avoid a political backlash.

Sociologist Boris Kagarlitsky said the loyal but passive mass of Russian citizens — which he puts at up to 80 percent — saw themselves as “outside politics,” and are focused on their own lives, seeing the war as none of their business.

“These people do not trust television, but they do not trust the internet either,” Kagarlitsky said. “So television propaganda doesn’t work on them, but any kind of antiwar propaganda or opposition discourse doesn’t work on them either, because they just do not turn on anything that has to do with politics or economic issues or general values or anything that doesn’t affect them directly.”

Online, such citizens seek out videos about hunting, fishing, cooking, fashion shows, animals, and similar, he said. Under Putin, “a good citizen is a passive citizen, who is not getting himself or herself involved in anything.”

Political analyst Tatiana Stanovaya founder of R. Politik analytical group, said even as failures and pressure from the hard-line pro-war lobby mounted, Putin was reluctant to risk upsetting the passive masses, particularly given opinion polls showing declining interest in the war.

Instead the Kremlin was carefully maintaining the narrative there was no war, just a “special military operation” where everything is going to plan and life, for most, can continue on as normal.

“I don’t see that he can radically pivot to review this understanding of the situation,” said Stanovaya, who is based in France, adding that mobilization was unlikely. “He bets that the West will fall apart with time. Ukraine will give up, one day. So today we had to retreat to spare manpower, but tomorrow Ukraine will sign a capitulation and all this will not matter, in Putin’s vision.”

But she added this approach required Russia’s elite to blindly follow Putin’s vision of a Russian victory cementing its place as a great power in a multipolar world, without knowing how this would happen.

“This is his stake, but he can’t explain it to the elites, because it’s nonsense. You just can’t be convincing about it. This is why he doesn’t really speak about it. He doesn’t explain how he is going to win,” she said, adding there was “a growing problem” with Putin’s leadership.

“He creates too much uncertainty. He is completely unclear about where we are going, what our goals are and how we’re going to win. He has detached himself from the elites. And following Putin, without knowing where we are going, can’t last forever.”

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HEADLINE	09/13 Challenges test Russia, China friendship
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/13/world/asia/china-russia-xi-putin.html
GIST	<p>BEIJING — The summit this week between President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia and Xi Jinping of China is a show of force by two autocratic leaders united against what they consider American hegemony. It is also a moment of mutual weakness as Russia suffers losses in Ukraine and China endures an economic slowdown.</p> <p>They come to the meeting, expected to take place later this week in Uzbekistan, with their own agendas and their own challenges that will test an important relationship both have described as a friendship with “no limits.”</p> <p>Moscow needs Beijing. Russia’s recent routs on the battlefields of Ukraine, coupled with the broad damage inflicted by Western sanctions, have made Chinese support all the more important. China has emerged as a major buyer of Russian commodities, purchases that have helped replenish Moscow’s coffers.</p> <p>Beijing, though, remains cautious. It wants to project strength in the increasingly acrimonious competition with the United States and can’t afford for its main partner in an authoritarian alliance to face a humiliating defeat. But providing substantial, additional help to Russia, either economically or militarily, risks running afoul of Western sanctions and imperiling China’s economy.</p> <p>“Xi’s China has been carrying out an exquisite tightrope walk with regard to Russia,” said Rana Mitter, a professor of history and politics at Oxford University. “It is keen to show support for Russia in general, but finds active support for an invasion too politically embarrassing to contemplate and wants Moscow to resolve matters one way or another.”</p>

Image matters for Mr. Xi as he prepares to secure a third term at a pivotal Communist Party congress in Beijing next month. His trip this week, during which he will attend a regional summit in Uzbekistan and visit Kazakhstan, marks the first time Mr. Xi has traveled abroad since the start of the pandemic and signals just how much he values the relationship. The meeting with Mr. Putin will give the Chinese leader a chance to look like a global statesman, playing well to a home audience.

Russia also provides much-needed backing for China's agenda. When House Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited Taiwan last month in defiance of China's claims to the self-ruled democracy, the Kremlin was quick to support Beijing's stance, describing the trip as "provocative" and pledging "absolute solidarity with China."

But China has tied itself to a war that has so far backfired for Russia. Any serious weakening of Mr. Putin's dominance in Russia could hurt Beijing's position at a time when the leadership is dealing with the political and economic fallout from its strict Covid policies.

The question confronting China is whether to double down or let Russia navigate the setbacks on its own. Both strategies carry risks, and most experts expect China to choose a middle path of continued economic support without openly circumventing sanctions or providing outright military assistance.

China, which has avoided describing Russia's invasion of Ukraine as a war, appears to be tempering its bets. When Mr. Xi's second-highest-ranking deputy, Li Zhanshu, met with Mr. Putin in Russia last week, Chinese state media emphasized the two countries' shared admiration but steered clear of overt advocacy for Russia's actions in Ukraine.

China's official Xinhua news agency said Mr. Li has told Mr. Putin that, "political mutual trust, strategic coordination and pragmatic cooperation between the two countries have reached an unprecedented level."

Xinhua made no mention of Ukraine, even as Russia state media claimed Beijing backed the invasion, portraying Mr. Li as having said that China "understands and supports Russia" particularly "on the situation in Ukraine."

"China keeps avoiding military involvement in any degree in Russia's war and will continue to do so, especially when the Russians have been in a drastic failure situation in the field," said Shi Yinhong, a professor of international relations at Renmin University in Beijing. "China's diplomatic and political support or sympathy will not really help them, though dramatic purchases of their energy since April help a little non-militarily."

Mr. Putin, who describes his war as part of a battle against nefarious Western powers that threaten Russia's very existence, appears to find China's middle ground vexing. He suggested as much last week in describing the long-running negotiations for a new pipeline that could allow Russia to export more Siberian natural gas to China rather than Europe — a matter of critical importance to Moscow as Europe rushes to reduce energy imports from Russia.

"Our Chinese friends are tough bargainers," Mr. Putin said at a conference in the Russian port city of Vladivostok focused on increasing economic ties with Asia. "Naturally, they proceed from their national interests in any deal, which is the only way to go."

Mr. Putin will go into the meeting with Mr. Xi looking to China as a lifeline at perhaps Russia's most tenuous moment since the invasion began in February. Russian forces have recently lost more than one thousand square miles of territory in Ukraine, creating new political headwinds for Mr. Putin — even from some of his longtime supporters, now frustrated by Russia's bumbling war effort.

At this week's meeting, Mr. Putin hopes to close a deal for the natural gas pipeline. Russia also needs access to China's high-tech exports and Chinese currency to pay for those goods, since Russia's access to dollars is severely restricted.

“China has more leverage than Russia,” said Alexander Gabuev, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

As Western countries shun Moscow, it is the expanding ties with China that Mr. Putin points to most as proof that Russia cannot be isolated. It is a relationship to which Mr. Putin has devoted enormous effort, one that accelerated after relations with the West took a dive following Russia’s annexation of the Ukrainian peninsula of Crimea in 2014.

The honor of meeting Mr. Xi in person is sure to be extolled by Russia’s state media as evidence of Mr. Putin’s continued acumen on the world stage. “Our relations have reached unprecedented heights,” Mr. Putin said at the Vladivostok conference.

The century-old relationship between the two nations is steeped in ideology and history. Moscow was crucial to the Chinese Communist Party’s founding, early survival and eventual victory in 1949 in China’s Civil War. Relatively close relations have continued, although they were interrupted by a rift in the 1960s so serious that the two countries fought border skirmishes.

Mr. Xi himself has a longstanding connection to Russia and Mr. Putin, whom he has met with 38 times. The Chinese leader’s father, Xi Zhongxun, a leading party figure in the 1950s, oversaw Soviet experts who came to China to help build the country’s heavy industry after the civil war, said Joseph Torigian, the author of an upcoming biography on the elder Mr. Xi.

Mr. Xi’s father visited Moscow, full of admiration. “He brought back mementos from Russia,” Mr. Torigian said, “that Xi Jinping later recalled.”

A week after he became China’s president in March 2013, Mr. Xi chose Russia for his first trip abroad and hinted in a speech there that the two countries would work together against the West.

“Currently, China and Russia are both in important periods of national revival, and bilateral relations have entered a new stage,” Mr. Xi said.

China now has the upper hand in the relationship, given its economic and military might. China’s economy was 10 times the size of Russia’s last year, before the war in Ukraine. From May through July, China bought record amounts of Russian oil at a deep discount and imported more Russian natural gas and coal.

Gazprom, the Russian gas giant, announced last week that China’s payments for gas from one pipeline would no longer be made in dollars or euros, but in Russian rubles and Chinese renminbi. Such deals make it easier for Russia to bypass Western banks and buy Chinese goods that are similar to high-tech Western products under export restrictions.

While China has sold many cars and other products that do not use Western technology to Russia, it appears to have avoided the riskier activity of reselling advanced Western technology. China appears to have refrained so far this year from shipping weapons to Russia, forcing Moscow to ask Iran and North Korea for military equipment.

China’s military has a long history of training with its Russian counterparts. Last week, China sent more than 2,000 People’s Liberation Army soldiers, 21 combat aircraft and three warships to participate in joint military exercises in eastern Russia.

It was the first time that China had sent air, land and naval forces to participate in the major military exercise, which Mr. Putin personally oversaw.

But Mr. Xi is unlikely to tie his country more closely to Russia than he did in February, when he declared the limitless friendship.

	“I don’t really expect any sort of new statement to be made by Xi Jinping that would be perceived as more strategic support for Russia,” said Li Mingjiang, a specialist in China’s international relations at the National University of Singapore, “nor would I expect China to walk back from what has been said.”
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HEADLINE	09/13 Reclaimed towns: frantic Russian retreat
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/13/world/europe/ukraine-russia-retreat-morale.html
GIST	<p>BALAKLIYA, Ukraine — The signs of desperation were everywhere. Abandoned military vehicles. Cans of food and dishes left on tables. Mail scattered on office floors. Clothes left hanging on lines.</p> <p>This is how the Russian army left the town of Balakliya in northeastern Ukraine, in a sign of a frantic, chaotic withdrawal as the Ukrainian Army closed in during a fast-moving counteroffensive over the last few days. The lightning assaults allowed Ukraine’s military to recapture hundreds of square miles of territory, strategic towns and abandoned weapons.</p> <p>One resident, Oleksandr Kryvosheya, said that he had overheard Russian soldiers yelling at their commanders on a radio in an armored personnel carrier parked in the courtyard of his apartment block. “You left us behind, you got out,” the soldiers protested, Mr. Kryvosheya said.</p> <p>“If they came to fight, if they came to build this new Russia, why didn’t they stay and fight in Balakliya?” he said in an interview on Tuesday.</p> <p>As the Russian defenses around the town collapsed, residents said, soldiers ran for whatever transport they could, leaving behind ammunition and weapons along with personal items in apartments where they had quartered.</p> <p>“Trucks drove through the city honking, and they climbed on and left,” said Igor Levchenko, a retiree, describing the Russian Army’s withdrawal after more than six months of occupation. “They didn’t have a fighting spirit. They were afraid.”</p> <p>The testimony of the town’s residents aligned with reports from other recently retaken villages in the Kharkiv region, where Ukraine has routed Russian forces, and towns that are still occupied in the south. The accounts shed a harsh light on apparent morale and communications breakdowns within Russian occupying forces that could have broad implications for the course of the war, should units elsewhere be afflicted with similar problems.</p> <p>Some witnesses described the Russian troops as increasingly ill-disciplined, unpredictable, anxious and, in some cases, simply scared.</p> <p>The morale of Russian troops is just one factor in Ukraine’s calculus about whether it can extend its gains in two campaigns, in the east and the south, without overstretching its own forces. But it could prove critical, as it did over the last week, when Russian forces deserted their positions and gear en masse and Ukrainian forces swept into dozens of villages and towns.</p> <p>Around 150,000 people in some 300 communities in northeastern Ukraine are living in areas reclaimed from Russian control, Hanna Malyar, Ukraine’s deputy minister of defense, said Tuesday.</p> <p>Even after the lightning offensive, Russia still holds vast swaths of territory in eastern and southern Ukraine and outguns the Ukrainians with artillery and tanks. Russian troops have increased shelling in some areas, including on the Ukrainian stronghold of Bakhmut, in the east, where both sides are deeply dug in. And the particular woes of units in the north may reflect a Ukrainian strategy of striking first where the Russians were weakest.</p>

In an interview on Tuesday, Ms. Malyar said that the Ukrainian Army was prepared to react “dynamically” to various situations, suggesting that its plans are not relying wholly on collapsing Russian morale.

“The Ukrainian Army is more motivated because we are fighting a just war, we are fighting for our land,” she said. “When Russian soldiers arrive here they realize they have been deceived by Russian propaganda.”

Still, a visit by journalists to the recaptured areas, organized by the Ukrainian police, turned up signs of what military analysts have said are worsening shortages of qualified troops in Russia’s military, which has [increasingly relied on a motley array of soldiers](#).

In the newly recaptured village of Verbivka, made up of a few isolated streets and brick homes surrounded by a sea of farm fields, a crowd of residents turned up to meet the police buses. Some cried, expressing both happiness and shock at the quick turn in fortunes.

They described Russian soldiers beating a hasty retreat.

A hundred or so soldiers had occupied the village from the self-declared Luhansk People’s Republic, one of the two Russia-backed separatist groups that rebelled in 2014, residents said.

Put on occupation duty in what had been a rear area for the Russians, the troops were ill-equipped, lacking even their own vehicles. They had been dropped off by buses, residents said.

Iryna Derevyanka, a schoolteacher, said one soldier had told her he was only fighting “to earn money.” The occupiers made little effort to sway residents with the ideology of expanding Russia’s borders, she said.

The soldiers quartered in homes of residents who had fled, typically about half a dozen men to a house, and drove in cars commandeered from locals. “They lived comfortably, taking whatever they wanted,” she said.

Confronted with an unexpected fight as the Ukrainian Army advanced, the soldiers seemed surprised, she said, as they had made no special preparations either for defense or retreat. In the panicky moments as they fled, some changed into looted civilian clothes.

Vitaly Bychok, a welder, said he had seen Russian military jackets hanging on a fence after soldiers changed into street clothes, in an effort to slip away disguised as fleeing civilians.

“They ran into the houses and changed into whatever clothes they could find,” he said. “They ran where they could, in small groups.”

The counterattack on the village was not without cost for the residents. About two dozen civilians were wounded by shrapnel from Ukrainian shelling, said Larisa Khrantsova, a clerk in the village store. “I heard people screaming in the streets,” she said.

But she said she understood the risks the Ukrainians had undertaken in the attack.

“How else could we get them out?” she said.

In the hours after the battle, the village was eerily silent.

“When they left it became quiet, and it was so scary I cannot describe it,” said Olha, an employee of an electrical company who asked that her last name not be published out of safety concerns. “We were scared that this silence would bring something horrible.”

The Russian soldiers, she said, were young and inexperienced. “They were silly, so young, children,” she said. “If they had surrendered, they would have survived.”

The soldiers’ lack of discipline extended to their treatment of civilians, residents said. If men expressed any displeasure with the Russian military’s presence, soldiers would hit them in the chest with a rifle butt, said Oleksandr, a retiree. “Many men had blue chests,” he said.

In the south, people who just escaped Russian controlled territory said some of the occupying troops seemed scared about the possibility of fighting off a Ukrainian advance.

“At the checkpoints, they seemed stressed out,” said Maksym Bratienkov, a beekeeper who fled a southern city, Berdyansk, for the Ukrainian-held city of Zaporizhzhia. “All night they were moving military equipment around, like they were in a hurry. They were looking for partisans and going to parts of town they had never been to.”

Another resident who fled southern-occupied territory, Yevhen Kornienko, said Russian troops had been barging into homes more often recently. “Even the simplest check can now end very badly,” he said.

Mr. Kornienko, speaking in a shelter for displaced people in Zaporizhzhia, said Russian forces in his hometown, Hola Prystan, had grown increasingly brutal. He also said that in the past few days, Russian soldiers were looting more than ever, robbing townspeople at gunpoint of electronic equipment, cars, computers, even dresses.

“They are out of control,” he said.

Mr. Bratienkov, the beekeeper, said not all the Russian soldiers in his town had behaved badly. Some were from the mostly Muslim republic of Dagestan, he said, while others came from a Ukrainian separatist group, and were to be feared. “These guys are fanatics,” he said.

In Balakliya, the police on Tuesday exhumed two bodies of men they said had been shot in the final, panicky days before the Russian withdrawal. Working in a thick stench, officers zipped the corpses into body bags and loaded them into a hearse taking them for an autopsy. In the town and nearby areas, Ukrainian prosecutors say they have found a dozen or so bodies so far.

As elsewhere, Russian soldiers had taken to living in abandoned apartments.

Tatyana Morkolenko, another retiree, lived next door to a dozen or so Russian soldiers who had settled into three apartments in her building. They were quiet neighbors, she said, but didn’t appear disciplined. When she entered one apartment after they fled, she found empty beer bottles in the kitchen.

In their haste, Russian soldiers left a city police station in a state of chaos, with papers scattered about the floor along with personal items, like a mug and boots. A can of ham was set out on a table, a meal never enjoyed.

The floor was littered with papers trodden over with muddy boots, including letters and drawings sent from Russian schoolchildren to cheer up the soldiers.

Upstairs, laundry was drying on a clothesline and looped over chairs, including a pair of gray, striped boxer shorts.

“Look,” said Oleg Tertishin, a Ukrainian policeman who referred to the Russian soldiers by a derisive term commonly used in Ukraine. “There are the underwear of the orcs.”

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HEADLINE	09/13 Ukraine on the march: win against Russia?
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/13/briefing/ukraine-counteroffensive-kharkiv-war.html

Could Ukraine actually win its war against Russia? Ukraine's surprising recent breakthrough in the northeast has caused more military analysts to start asking that question.

Over the past week, Ukrainian troops have [retaken almost 3,400 square miles of land](#), an area equal to about half the size of the New York metropolitan area. The gains include Iziurm, a city that Russia had been using as a rail hub to supply its forces elsewhere. Ukraine now controls nearly all of the province of Kharkiv.

The Kharkiv operation surprised Russian military forces while they were focused on other regions and has given Ukraine its clearest victory since Russia's retreat from around Kyiv. President Volodymyr Zelensky and his military advisers planned the attack partly so they could claim such a victory, [as this Times story explains](#).

"The Ukrainian push is a big deal," said Julian Barnes, one of the reporters who wrote that story. "They needed a dramatic win, and this is one."

Ukraine's advance has also undermined Vladimir Putin's war propaganda, [causing some criticism of the military](#), even from some pro-invasion Russians. More than 40 local elected officials across Russia signed a two-sentence petition demanding Putin resign, and a senior member of Parliament from Putin's party said the retreat had done "very serious damage" to the operation.

The recent developments have cheered Ukraine's supporters in Western Europe and the U.S., who have been anxiously trying to maintain public support for military aid. Steven Erlanger, who covers European diplomacy from Brussels, points out that European citizens are girding for a winter of high energy prices because of Putin's restriction of gas sales. The recapturing of Kharkiv allows more Europeans to feel as if their support of Ukraine is [a worthwhile cause rather than a lost one](#). "It's a morale boost," Steven said.

In recent months, I have tried to focus readers of this newsletter on [three broad scenarios for the war's outcome](#): one, a Russian victory that includes control over large parts of Ukraine; two, a stalemate in which Russia controls much of the Donbas region, in Ukraine's east, but little else; or, three, a Ukrainian victory, in which Russia largely retreats, with the exception of some parts of Donbas.

Many analysts continue to believe that a stalemate remains the most likely outcome. But I told you in [our most recent Ukraine update](#) — last month — that the chances of a Ukrainian victory had risen. They have risen even further since then.

"The last few days have shown that the Ukrainians can craft effective plans based on intelligence, advice and high-tech American weaponry used in innovative ways," Julian said. "And those plans, so far, have delivered real battlefield results."

Ukraine's strengths ...

A central question now is whether Ukraine can also make progress in two other regions where Russia is more entrenched: Donbas, in the east; and southern provinces in between Donbas and the Crimea peninsula (which Russia annexed in 2014). In recent weeks, Ukraine [has also reclaimed](#) about 200 square miles in the southern provinces.

A major reason for Ukrainian optimism is the continued support from the West, including weapons for Ukraine and sanctions on Russia. The progress in Kharkiv has depended on longer-range missiles that the U.S. and Britain were initially unwilling to provide but have supplied in recent months. U.S. officials also worked with Ukrainian military leaders to plan the assault on Kharkiv.

At the same time, the sanctions appear to be hurting both Russia's domestic economy and its war efforts. Its factories are struggling to produce enough basic military supplies, while Russia is also having a hard time buying enough high-tech equipment on world markets. One sign that the military is running low on supplies: It has been trying to buy North Korean rockets and artillery shells, U.S. intelligence officials say.

... and Russia's strengths

Still, recapturing territory in the south and the east is unlikely to be easy for Ukraine. Russia has concentrated more forces in those regions than it had in Kharkiv. Now that Ukraine holds Kharkiv, it also has longer supply lines to defend, John Blaxland, a military expert at the Australian National University, told The Times. The seizure of Izium and its railways may help Ukraine maintain its lengthened supply lines, other experts said.

Biden administration officials continue to express skepticism that Ukraine will be able to reclaim all of the land it held in February, just before the invasion. Russia continues to have vast resources at its disposal, even if the sanctions have created some constraints: Russia has been firing many more artillery rounds per day than the Ukrainians. If that advantage continues, dislodging Russia from territory it holds may be difficult.

Russia also has a history of forcing brutal losses on its own soldiers to win extended wars, and Putin has shown he is willing to commit atrocities (as he did in Syria and Chechnya) to exhaust an opponent. Some analysts — including [Ross Douthat of Times Opinion](#) and [Anne Applebaum of The Atlantic](#) — have argued that Western leaders should be planning for how they would respond to an escalation in Ukraine.

Ukraine also faces a disadvantage that its allies have imposed on it, my colleague Helene Cooper points out. The U.S. and the E.U. have told Ukrainian officials that they cannot use Western military equipment to strike inside Russia — out of a fear that such attacks might cause Putin to expand the war or use nuclear weapons. From a tactical standpoint, that restriction hurts Ukraine's ability to win the war, because it means that Russia does not have to worry about defending its own territory.

Yet it's a restriction that seems unlikely to change anytime soon.

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HEADLINE	09/13 Dueling realities on economy
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/13/us/politics/is-the-economy-good.html https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2022/09/13/business/economy/us-economy.html
GIST	<p>If there's one thing Democrats and Republicans absolutely cannot and never will agree on as the November midterms approach, it's whether the U.S. economy is good or bad right now.</p> <p>In a recent New York Times/Siena College poll of registered voters, for instance, 79 percent of Republicans said the economy was poor, while only 36 percent of Democrats agreed.</p> <p>The federal government reported on Tuesday that prices rose 8.3 percent through August — down from 8.5 percent in July, but still an unexpectedly high figure that sent markets into a tailspin.</p> <p>President Biden nevertheless hailed Tuesday's numbers as “more progress in bringing global inflation down,” though he added that there was “more work still to do.”</p> <p>How and why partisans can see the exact same economy so differently is a critical topic as we near the fall elections, which are less than two months away — and closer than that in many states that start early voting soon.</p> <p>Reams of social science research indicate that voters primarily follow the old maxim “it's the economy, stupid” when they cast their ballots; some forecasters have built entire prediction models that are reasonably accurate using macroeconomic indicators alone.</p> <p>To sort out the facts from the spin, I chatted with Ben Casselman, who covers the economy for The New York Times and knows the data inside and out.</p> <p>Here's our conversation, edited for length and clarity:</p>

So, is the U.S. economy good or bad? Democrats and Republicans can't seem to agree on an answer.

This is a tricky question even before you get to the political side of it. The job market is good right now — arguably very good. Unemployment is low. Wages are rising. If you want a job, chances are you can get one.

Other metrics are a lot more mixed. Corporate profits have been good, but a lot of companies have said they're seeing signs of a slowdown. Consumer spending isn't growing very much right now, but it isn't falling either. The stock market obviously had a very bad day on Tuesday, but the broader financial system isn't showing the kinds of stresses we saw in the 2008 crisis.

If that were the whole story, we'd probably be talking about how the recovery has slowed down since last year but remains solid, and frankly you and I probably wouldn't be having this conversation.

But of course it's not the whole story, because of inflation. Gas prices are up. Food prices are up. Those pay increases I mentioned earlier aren't keeping up with the cost of living. For a lot of people, that issue overwhelms everything else.

I noticed after Donald Trump was elected in 2016 that many Republicans [suddenly told Gallup](#) that the economy was great, even though nothing had changed other than the president-to-be. Have you noticed this phenomenon, too? If so, how do you explain it?

If you go back and look at polling data from the 1980s and 1990s, there didn't used to be this big partisan split in how Americans viewed the economy.

That began to shift in the 2000s, when Republicans rated the economy as better than Democrats did during George W. Bush's presidency, and it's gotten wider ever since. Under Barack Obama, Democrats thought the economy was better than Republicans. As soon as Donald Trump took office, that switched. And now under President Biden, it has flipped back.

The swings are especially wide among Republicans. As you noted, the moment Trump was elected, Republicans' assessment of the economy soared, and then their outlook cratered right after the 2020 election.

Basically, the economy is like seemingly everything else in our society in that it has become a much more partisan issue over the past couple of decades.

Are there other explanations out there besides partisanship that can account for such a wide disparity in views of the economy?

I don't think it's surprising that people would have different assessments of the economy right now, because people's experience of the economy is different.

If you're a home builder or a real estate agent, this is probably a pretty tough time for you given what's going on in the housing market. If you're a recent college grad entering a strong labor market and maybe about to get a bunch of your student debt forgiven, it's a different story.

But with a few exceptions — student debt being one of them, maybe — it's pretty tough to argue that those factors can explain the partisan differences we see. It's not as if the Biden economy has been persistently better for Democrats than Republicans.

OK, Ben, I have to ask: What is up with inflation?

Oof. How long have you got?

The problem with talking about inflation right now is that you can say almost anything and have it be true. "Inflation is the highest it's been in decades." True. "Prices are falling." *Also* true, at least by one measure. "Inflation is a global phenomenon." True. "The Democrats' policies contributed to inflation." True, although we can argue all day about how much.

Here's what I think we can say with confidence: Inflation soared last year, primarily for a bunch of pandemic-related reasons — snarled supply chains, shifts in consumer demand — but also at least in part because of all the stimulus money that we poured into the economy. Then, just when most forecasters expected inflation to start falling, it took off again because of the jump in oil prices tied to the war in Ukraine.

Now, inflation is falling again. Overall consumer prices were up just 0.1 percent in August, and a separate measure showed prices *falling* in July. But a lot of that is because of the recent drop in gas prices, which we all know could reverse at any time. So-called core inflation, which sets aside volatile food and energy prices, actually accelerated in August.

All of which means we don't know how long the recent pause in inflation will last, and we definitely don't know whether Biden will get credit for it if it does.

What does your read of history tell you about what we might expect the economy to do between now and November, and how voters might process any changes?

So here's a fun fact for you: Lehman Brothers filed for bankruptcy on Sept. 15, 2008, setting off the global financial crisis. Before that, it seemed at least somewhat plausible that the meltdown in the housing market would stay confined to one sector of the economy, and that the economy could avoid a recession.

In other words, a lot can happen in two months. Economists — and journalists, for that matter — are notoriously bad at predicting recessions. Still, if you believe the forecasts, then what we're likely to see between now and Election Day is a gradual slowdown in both inflation and the job market. So inflation will probably still be uncomfortably high, but coming down, and the job market will probably still be pretty strong, but getting weaker.

Voters tend to form their views of the economy several months before elections, so as long as we don't see any huge shifts, I imagine that people who think the economy is bad today will still think that two months from now.

That said, if gas prices shoot back up or we get a wave of layoffs or something else fundamentally changes in the economy, it's not hard to imagine that making a difference in a close election.

The U.S. economy is in a strange place right now. [Job growth is slowing](#), but [demand for workers is strong](#). [Inflation is high](#) (but not as high as last spring). Consumers are spending more in some areas, but cutting back in others. Job openings are high but falling, while layoffs are low and ... well, it depends what indicator you watch.

This is one snapshot of where the economy stands, based on an analysis of how various indicators compare with their historical levels and whether they've been getting better or worse in recent months.

There is no universally accepted definition of a "good" number of jobs or rate of wage growth, which means the exact placement of the various measures is somewhat subjective. Still, the patterns are revealing: The indicators are concentrated in the lower right-hand quadrant, meaning most of the economy is doing well, but slowing down.

Even in the best of times, it can be hard to get a handle on what's happening in an economy with 150 million workers and \$20 trillion worth of annual output. And these are far from the best of times. The pandemic and its ripple effects are continuing to disrupt global supply chains and [keeping millions of Americans out of work](#). The war in Ukraine has pushed up gas and food prices, and added a new source of uncertainty. The Federal Reserve is trying to beat back the fastest inflation in decades — and threatening to cause a recession in the process.

By one common definition, the United States is already in a recession, because gross domestic product has [declined for two consecutive quarters](#). Most economists [consider that definition too simplistic](#), and prefer to look at a broader array of indicators across a variety of categories. They also say that to understand how the economy is doing, it is important to consider both levels and rates of change. It matters, for example, not only whether unemployment is low or high, but also whether it is rising or falling.

It also helps to consider the latest data in historical context. The graphics below show how this economic moment compares with recessions of the past 40 years, using the end of the second quarter as a benchmark. In most cases, the latest numbers don't look much like the recessions of the past, although many show signs of a slowdown.

Job Market

If there is one part of the economy that is clearly doing well right now, it is the job market. Employers have added nearly six million jobs in the past year, and the unemployment rate recently matched a 50-year low. Employers would hire even more workers if they could find them: There were more than 11 million job openings at the end of July.

Still, not everything is rosy. The share of adults who are either working or actively looking for work is still [well below its prepandemic level](#), which helps explain the frequent complaints from businesses that they can't find enough workers. After months of strong gains, hiring slowed in August, and the total number of jobs remains millions below where it would be if the pandemic had never happened.

Layoffs, as measured through filings for unemployment claims, began rising earlier this year but have since edged back down; however, another measure, from a different survey, did not show a similar increase.

If layoffs pick up, watch out: In the past, when unemployment has increased even modestly, it has almost always meant the economy is in a recession.

Income and Prices

Workers have seen their pay rise significantly in the past two years, as the hot labor market has given workers the leverage to demand raises. Other types of income, including from businesses and investments, have been rising too. The problem is, prices have been rising about as fast — or in some cases even faster.

The National Bureau of Economic Research, the semiofficial arbiter of recessions in the United States, focuses on personal income that is adjusted for inflation and excludes unemployment benefits and other government transfer payments. That indicator is still rising, in part because it measures income in the aggregate — meaning not how much the average person makes, but how much everyone, collectively, makes. When more people are working, overall incomes go up.

Many individuals, though, are falling behind. Inflation hit a four-decade high earlier this year, and though it has ebbed a bit in the past two months, no one is sure how long that will last. Even with the recent cooldown, average hourly earnings have risen more slowly than prices this year, although gains have been stronger among lower earners. Other measures of wages tell a similar story. And even without adjustments for inflation, wage gains have been slowing in recent months — a possible sign that workers' rare moment of leverage may be nearing its end.

Consumers

Economic indicators might be pointing in different directions, but this much is clear: Americans feel terrible about the economy right now. Consumer sentiment, as measured by a long-running survey from the University of Michigan, recently hit a record low — lower even than in the first weeks of the pandemic, when tens of millions of people lost their jobs overnight.

In the past, falling consumer sentiment has been a fairly reliable recession indicator. Consumer spending accounts for about 70 percent of G.D.P., so when people stop spending, the economy is almost guaranteed to run into hard times. So far, however, Americans haven't acted on their dour mood by cutting back. Even in the face of high prices, people have continued to shell out for plane tickets, restaurant meals and other small luxuries. And now consumer sentiment is showing some signs of improvement as gas prices fall.

Interpreting the consumer economy is tough right now, however, because of how the pandemic disrupted spending patterns. Many people are eager to catch up on deferred travel and experiences, even if they have to pay more for them, which could cause spending on services like these to hold up even if the economy slows. Spending on goods, meanwhile, soared in the pandemic, as people traded gym memberships for home exercise equipment. Goods spending has now begun to slow. But supply-chain snarls have complicated the picture — rising car sales, for example, might mean that demand is strong, but it also might mean that production problems are easing and that there are finally more vehicles available to buy.

Production

Historically, one of the surest indicators of a coming recession has been a decline in orders for industrial equipment — companies don't invest in so-called capital goods such as new machinery or delivery trucks when they're worried that demand is about to fall sharply. Right now, though, those signals are being blurred by the same issues that make it hard to interpret consumer spending data. If manufacturers pull back now, is it because of falling demand, or because they can't get the parts they need?

There is one sector that is, unequivocally, behaving as if we're headed for a recession: housing. Ever since the Federal Reserve began raising interest rates this year, builders have been reducing construction, and would-be buyers have been pulling out of the market. So far, however, there is little sign of a surge in foreclosures or of the financial stresses caused by the last housing bust.

A slowdown that stays confined to one or two sectors doesn't constitute a recession, which by definition involves a sustained decline in activity across a broad swath of the economy. It might not be obvious right away, but when a recession does hit, it will show up in virtually every major indicator.

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HEADLINE	09/13 Hospitals: flexible space for next pandemic
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/13/business/hospitals-pandemic-flexible-space.html
GIST	<p>Officials at Rady Children's Hospital in San Diego had already begun work on a \$1.2 billion transformation of its campus when the pandemic hit, forcing them to switch gears. As hospitals nationwide struggled to deal with surging cases, it became clear that the facility's new design would need to evolve.</p> <p>"When the pandemic came along, it really changed the lens of how we do health care design," said Dr. Nicholas Holmes, chief operating officer of Rady, the only children's hospital in San Diego County and the largest in California. "And what we learned over the past few years, first and foremost, is to be as flexible in the design process as we can."</p> <p>The early waves of the pandemic came crashing into hospitals, revealing intensive care units without enough beds, hallways and waiting rooms that forced the healthy and sick to commingle, and ventilation systems that became conduits for airborne pathogens. Given that hindsight, many hospitals are remodeling with a philosophy of flexible design, the idea that spaces should be adaptable for different purposes at different times. When the next pandemic comes, they'll be able to better meet the moment.</p> <p>Traditional hospital design calls for sections that sequester the most vulnerable and contagious patients, with features not found in ordinary inpatient rooms. These include changeable airflow systems to keep microorganisms from traveling beyond the room's walls; headwalls behind beds for electric, gas and equipment mounts; and, in general, a larger floor plan to accommodate specialized equipment like ventilators.</p>

In times of crisis, hospitals require more of these specialized spaces, with different protocols of isolation for different diseases.

At Rady Children's Hospital, where a new seven-story tower will house an intensive care unit as well as an emergency department, designers looked at the lessons learned from the pandemic and scrapped the tower's original rectangular floor plan. In its place, they created one shaped like an X, with a 60-bed floor plan that can be converted into 20 fully isolated rooms for infectious-disease patients, should the need arise.

"Rather than looking at it on a single-room basis, when you think about maximum flexibility, you think about banks of rooms," Dr. Holmes said. "Seeing it through that lens allows you to not have to transfer patients who are moderately sick into critically intensive care units."

Much of the shift in hospital design revolves around surge capacity, which is how health care workers adapt inside their buildings when the number of sick patients jumps substantially. In March and April 2020, the sudden rise in contagious patients meant some hospitals were scrambling to find beds, setting up overflow tents in parking lots and rationing equipment.

"During the pandemic, they were doing hopscotch or leapfrog; they had to adapt on the fly," said Douglas King, vice president of health care at Project Management Advisors, a real estate consulting firm. "Now hospitals are identifying wards, usually of 24 to 32 beds, and they can stack some of those wards together to become pandemic wards."

To prepare for that shift, designers are thinking about how traditional rooms can quickly morph into isolation wards by upgrading or overhauling their heating, ventilation and air-conditioning systems. Fabrics and finishes, too, are being reconsidered, with an eye toward durable materials that can withstand industrial-level scrubbing.

Finally, the pathways that lead to these wards need to be rethought, Mr. King said, "so the transportation for patients and staff allows these spaces to be isolated and operated independently from the rest of the hospital."

A new I.C.U. at Doylestown Hospital in Doylestown, Pa., which opened in 2021, has private rooms meant to flex between intensive care and step-down care. The rooms are clustered in pods of eight to reduce traffic in corridors.

It will be the second new wing with flexible design at Doylestown. After realizing that a new wing for heart and vascular care that opened in January 2020 could be used for critically ill Covid-19 patients during the pandemic, hospital administrators leaned into flexible design.

"The pandemic proved the need to have flexible space," said Jim Brexler, chief executive of Doylestown Health. "The impact of having adequate critical care space was essential, and you don't want to build all that out and not be able to use it for other purposes."

"This is the future of hospitals," he added.

CannonDesign, an architecture firm in New York, was involved in two hospital expansion projects.

At Barnes-Jewish Hospital in St. Louis, workers broke ground on a 16-story inpatient tower in 2021, including acute-care rooms that can morph into I.C.U. rooms. To achieve that flexibility, designers included additional outlets for medical gas and electricity, and larger clearances around beds to accommodate extra equipment. The upper half of doors will be made of glass to allow practitioners to observe highly contagious patients without entering the room.

And at WellSpan Health in York, Pa., an eight-story surgical and critical care tower being built as part of a \$398 million hospital expansion will have oversized patient rooms that can function as spaces for critical care.

“The general sense that I get is that this is not a one-time situation that we just went through with Covid,” said Jocelyn Stroupe, co-director of health interiors for CannonDesign. “It’s just one of many infectious disease conditions that we’re going to be experiencing in the coming decades.”

Preparations for those disease conditions can be seen on other construction sites across the nation.

Ballantyne Medical Center, a 168,000-square-foot hospital in Charlotte, N.C., scheduled to open next year, will feature dual headwalls for more capacity in patient rooms and ventilation systems that allow rooms to be converted to negative pressure ones that prevent harmful airborne particles from flowing into other spaces. An outpatient center being built as part of a \$151 million renovation at Grady Memorial Hospital in Atlanta will have flexible rooms with mobile equipment that can quickly be transferred from space to space.

And in Los Angeles, CHA Hollywood Presbyterian Medical Center plans to open a new patient tower in 2023 with larger waiting rooms that allow for distancing, more rooms with negative pressure ventilation and a tripled capacity for blood-oxygen monitoring systems. Thirty-three private rooms are being added as well, all of which can be reconfigured for surge capacity.

The focus on flexible design is not unique to hospitals, said John Swift, who leads the health care sector at the engineering and design consulting firm Buro Happold. Three years into the pandemic, it has become an almost universal concern.

“We’re seeing these trends not just in health care but in all the facilities we do work in, from laboratory buildings to institutional buildings on college campuses,” he said.

The shift to flexible design will mean that, in the short term at least, some hospitals are better equipped than others to handle the next pandemic. And it will also exacerbate the gap between the haves and have-nots in health care, said Armstead Jones, a strategic real estate adviser for Real Estate Bees.

“You have hospitals that are barely holding on in rural areas, and they can’t afford flexibility in architecture. So what does it look like to them?” he said.

But in the long term, designers expect the lessons from the coronavirus to resonate. Pandemic modifications, they say, are likely to eventually be written into law, much like access for those in wheelchairs and structural requirements for earthquakes.

“This is no different from the code updates we go through every time there is an earthquake in California,” said Carlos L. Amato, a health care architect with Cannon Design. “The lessons learned postpandemic will eventually make it into building codes.”

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HEADLINE	09/13 Audit: foreign fraudsters stole pandemic aid
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/sep/13/foreign-fraudsters-broke-feds-firewall-steal-pande/
GIST	<p>Foreign criminal syndicates are estimated to have stolen tens of billions of dollars in pandemic relief money, and an inspector general’s report is shedding light on how some of that happened.</p> <p>The Small Business Administration’s watchdog says the agency tried to block foreign applications to its Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDL), one of two major programs activated to prop up businesses during the early COVID-19 pandemic shutdowns.</p>

Still, thousands of applications filed from foreign Internet Protocol addresses got through the [SBA's](#) firewall. As a result, the agency doled out about \$1.3 billion in payments that the inspector general deemed at severe risk of being fraudulent.

Filing from overseas isn't an automatic signal of fraud or illegality, but it is a red flag, the Office of the Inspector General said.

"The numerous applications submitted from foreign IP addresses are an indication of potential fraud that may involve international criminal organizations," the inspector general said in announcing the investigation Monday evening. "OIG has ongoing investigations into international organized crime operations that applied for and stole pandemic relief funds."

The audit didn't expand on those investigations, but overseas criminal syndicates have been identified in massive amounts of fraud related to U.S. pandemic spending.

There were three major relief programs: expanded unemployment benefits, which totaled about \$900 billion; the SBA's Paycheck Protection Program, which extended about \$800 billion in forgivable loans to small businesses to keep them afloat; and the EIDL, with roughly \$342 billion in loans, grants and advance payments to businesses.

Unemployment benefits were particularly vulnerable, with few controls early on to weed out bogus applications. One estimate puts total unemployment fraud at more than \$200 billion, with international criminal syndicates likely accounting for well more than \$100 billion. Much of that went to organizations tied to U.S. adversaries in Iran and Russia.

The SBA programs were tougher to scam, though early estimates still run to tens of billions of dollars. The inspector general's report captures some of that activity.

The audit found that the SBA weeded out "millions of attempts" to submit EIDL applications from foreign IP addresses.

It also found that SBA officials were aware of the potential and took steps to combat it with a four-layer defense.

The first layer was a firewall that was supposed to block applications from six countries with histories of fraud. The second layer was another firewall that was supposed to block any application with a foreign IP address altogether.

Layer three was supposed to flag any foreign IP addresses that still made it through, and layer four was a personal review by a loan officer.

The audit found that foreign IP addresses were able to access the loan system more than 233,000 times.

Nearly 42,000 applications from foreign addresses made it all the way through the security layers and were granted, resulting in fraudulent loans, grants and advance payments totaling \$1.3 billion.

When auditors reviewed 50 applications that got through the firewall despite coming from foreign addresses, they found 16 weren't flagged by the third layer of defense. Of the 34 that were flagged, the in-person loan officer review bungled 15 of them.

SBA and the contractor it hired to process applications pronounced themselves stumped at how foreign IP addresses were able to circumvent the firewalls, the audit said.

The audit didn't name the contractor, but a congressional report this summer said the Trump administration awarded RER Solutions a \$750 million contract to handle the applications despite being unable to "perform core contract tasks."

More than 40% of all pandemic loans the SBA oversaw may have been approved without an agency employee conducting a review, the investigation found.

In an official response to the audit, SBA Associate Administrator Patrick Kelley sought to put the numbers in context.

He said successful foreign IP applications were just 1% of all approved EIDL cases and the SBA did a particularly good job of weeding out applications from the six high-risk nations, which the report did not identify.

The \$1.3 billion in overseas payouts was less than half a percent of total EIDL spending.

Mr. Kelley said the system was set up in the early days of the pandemic shutdown, when experts warned of a looming economic collapse.

“As a result, the initial focus of SBA’s COVID relief programs had to be on providing financial assistance as quickly as possible to respond to the crisis,” Mr. Kelley wrote. “While it is true that great speed was needed when developing the COVID EIDL program and to deliver this economic assistance to millions of small businesses impacted by the pandemic; we do not believe there is a tradeoff between speed and fraud controls.”

The SBA generally agreed with the inspector general’s recommendation to review all foreign IP address applications that got through the system and figure out which ones were bogus. The agency said it will try to recover the money.

Nigeria, known for being home to sophisticated and determined fraudsters, led the way among foreign IP address applications with 33,477 submitted. Of those, 241 totaling nearly \$20 million were approved.

Canada led the way in dollar amount, with \$183 million paid out on 3,755 applications. A total of 20,500 were submitted from Canadian addresses.

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HEADLINE	09/13 Ukraine dilemma: how far, how fast?
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/sep/13/ukraine-faces-new-dilemma-how-far-and-how-fast-pre/
GIST	<p>Ukraine’s stunning successes on the battlefield in recent days have sparked renewed optimism in Kyiv that a lasting, decisive victory over Russia may be within reach.</p> <p>Still, the rapid pace of the Ukrainian counteroffensive comes with high-stakes questions. Military analysts openly cautioned Kyiv on Tuesday to slow its attacks or risk overextending its forces and giving the shellshocked Russian army an opportunity to regain its footing.</p> <p>Striking the right balance between pressing its advantage and exercising strategic restraint will be the key challenge to Ukrainian military leaders — and their U.S. and other Western military advisers — over the coming days and weeks. After months of defense against relentless Russian ground attacks and artillery barrages, Ukraine’s counteroffensive campaign has quickly retaken ground, including the strategically vital northeastern city of Kharkiv, with more modest gains in the south near Kherson.</p> <p>Ukrainian military officials said they had retaken about 2,300 square miles of territory over the past several weeks. Ukrainian troops on Tuesday took control of Vovchansk, just 2 miles from the Russian border. Russian troops have controlled the city since the early days of the nearly 7-month-old war.</p> <p>U.S. military officials confirmed that Russian troops in some instances have been pushed back across their border and were seemingly unprepared for the well-coordinated Ukrainian counterattack. The military blog Oryx, which has kept a meticulous list of weaponry gained and lost in the fighting based on open</p>

sources, is reporting that Ukraine captured or destroyed at least 151 Russian infantry fighting vehicles and 104 tanks in the past two weeks.

“If anyone was surprised ... it was probably the Russians,” Air Force Brig Gen. Patrick Ryder, a Pentagon spokesman, told reporters at a Tuesday briefing.

Russian morale has taken a significant hit, foreign intelligence estimates suggest, and Russian President Vladimir Putin has come under fire even at home as the battlefield losses mount and questions grow about the competence of the military.

With momentum clearly on their side, Ukrainian leaders insist their goal is to push Russian troops out of Ukraine entirely, including from Crimea, which Russia has controlled for nearly nine years after a forced military annexation in 2014. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Tuesday that Russia has again resorted to indiscriminate, long-range shelling of cities such as Kharkiv because it has finally realized it cannot defeat Ukraine on the battlefield.

“This is a sign of the desperation of those who contrived this war,” Mr. Zelenskyy said. “This is how they react to the defeat of Russian forces in the Kharkiv region. They can’t do anything to our heroes on the battlefield.”

Ukrainian troops now appear poised to press forward with a major offensive in the Donbas region, arguably Moscow’s most fortified stronghold in the country. Serhiy Gaidai, Ukrainian governor of the Luhansk region, told Reuters that he expects a significant counterattack in the region soon.

Russia controls virtually all of the Luhansk province, which with Donetsk makes up the Donbas. Russian military commanders have said in recent days that they are pulling troops back from Kharkiv, presumably to reinforce their defensive lines in the Donbas.

Against that backdrop, some foreign officials seem to share Kyiv’s optimism and are talking openly about a total Ukrainian victory.

“Our aid & Ukrainian desire for freedom is literally booming but there is still more we can do,” Estonian Defense Minister Urmas Reinsalu said in a Twitter post Tuesday. “We shall not rest until [Ukraine] has won this war.”

Proceeding with caution

Ukraine still faces significant hurdles. Although it has used U.S.- and NATO-supplied weapons and equipment to great effect, Ukraine is outgunned and outmanned by the Russian military. That means pressing forward too fast and in too many theaters at once could quickly leave the Ukrainians overextended and exposed.

“In truth, there are some elements of Ukraine’s force that can’t ‘keep up’ with the front-line fighters. That’s not an insult, it’s an understanding of the [Ukrainian] force,” retired U.S. Army Gen. Mark Hertling wrote in a series of Twitter posts Tuesday analyzing Ukraine’s posture.

“Right now, [Ukrainian] field commanders — while excited about gains — must consider operational tempo,” he said. “It’s required.”

Ukrainian commanders don’t have to look far for object lessons. Russia’s inability to install the proper operational tempo is widely believed to have been its undoing in the early weeks of the war. Russian troops pressed ahead quickly with an assault on the Ukrainian capital of Kyiv but failed to establish sustainable, well-defended supply lines, leaving them highly vulnerable to Ukrainian drone and rocket attacks. Dozens of Russian tanks and other vehicles were stranded on the highways outside Kyiv because of Russia’s inability to get fuel to the front lines.

Russian commanders also failed to bring into Ukraine their most sophisticated electronic warfare systems that could have disabled Ukrainian drones. Military analysts say that mistake cost the Russians dearly in early attacks.

For Ukraine, the possibility for overextension is likely greatest in the Donbas. Before Moscow launched its Feb. 24 invasion, it was the site of years of bitter but indecisive fighting between Ukrainian troops and pro-Russian militias. Russian troops and their proxies have a significant foothold in the Donbas, and Moscow has installed its own governing structure and appointed its own local officials in parts of the two provinces.

Pushing all Russian elements out of the area is likely a long-term proposition. Western military officials have repeatedly stressed that fighting in the Donbas could drag on for months or even years.

Still, continued Ukrainian gains could change Mr. Putin's calculus and willingness to continue the war, especially if criticism at home keeps mounting. Russia's military has sustained significant damage in recent weeks, presenting long-term problems for Mr. Putin's war machine.

The Russian leader faces what could be an uncomfortable conversation with Chinese President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of a security conference this week in Uzbekistan. Chinese state media have backed the Kremlin rhetorically in the war and blamed Ukraine and NATO for "provoking" Russia. Still, Beijing's wariness of offering economic or military aid to Russia is likely to increase given the losses on the ground.

The British Ministry of Defense said Tuesday that Russia's premier 1st Guards Tank Army was "severely degraded" during the war.

"It will likely take years for Russia to rebuild this capability," the ministry said in a Twitter post.

The Ukrainian advance appears to be gradually pushing back Russian forces in the south near Kherson. That suggests Russia is suffering simultaneous defeats on multiple fronts.

Ukrainian officials said this week that Russian troops outside Kherson on the banks of the Dnipro River are attempting to negotiate for their surrender, and images on social media appeared to show Russian soldiers lying on the street waiting to be captured and Russian tanks abandoned as their forces hastily drew back.

"Ukrainian operations in Kharkiv Oblast are unlikely to have had such a dramatic psychological effect on Russian troops this far south, and both the withdrawal of troops from forward positions in Kyselivka and reports of surrender negotiations are indicators that Ukrainian counteroffensives in the south are progressing in a significant way, even if visibility on this axis is limited by the shift in focus to Kharkiv," researchers with the Institute for the Study of War wrote Monday.

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HEADLINE	09/14 Day 203 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/14/russia-ukraine-at-a-glance-what-we-know-on-day-203-of-the-invasion
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ukraine has set its sights on freeing all territory occupied by invading Russian forces after driving them back in a speedy counteroffensive in the north-east. In an evening address, Ukraine president Volodymyr Zelenskiy said about 8,000 sq km (3,100 square miles) have been liberated so far, apparently all in the north-eastern region of Kharkiv. "Stabilisation measures" had been completed in about half of that territory, Zelenskiy said, "and across a liberated area of about the same size, stabilisation measures are still ongoing".• Ukraine's deputy defence Minister Hanna Malyar said 150,000 people had been liberated from Russian rule in the area of Balakliia, a crucial military supply hub taken by Ukrainian forces late last week.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The White House said the United States is likely to announce a new military aid package for Ukraine in “coming days”. Russian forces have left defensive positions, particularly in and around Kharkiv, the second largest city in Ukraine, a US spokesperson said. • While Ukraine celebrates the tremendous gains its military has made in its dramatic counter-offensive, officials remain stoic about the challenges ahead in the newly reoccupied territory. Lesia Vasylenko, a member of the Ukrainian parliament, spoke of discovering the beheaded bodies of Ukrainian military, human faeces everywhere, widespread looting and terrorised teenagers who were still too scared to leave their basements. “Liberation uncovers many crimes. It’s as if we are on the verge of hundreds, if not thousands of Buchas, just of a smaller scale,” Vasylenko said, referencing the civilian mass graves and evidence of torture uncovered in the town of Bucha when Ukrainian forces recaptured the Kyiv region. “But whatever the scale there will be tribunals, retribution and justice.” • Ukrainian officials said there was a torture chamber set up by the Russian military in now liberated Balakliia. Serhiy Bolvinov, head of the Kharkiv region national police investigation department, said that 40 people had been detained during the occupation. • The general staff of Ukraine’s armed forces warned that Russian forces were continuing to loot as they withdrew from occupied territories. On a stretch of highway heading into Russian territory, Ukrainian officials spotted civilian vehicles with licence plates from the Kharkiv region, driven by Russian military and weighed down with looted belongings. In the south, there were reports of Russian occupants breaking the gates of private garages and taking cars, as well as removing furniture. • Russian forces continued to hit a number of civilian and civilian infrastructure facilities throughout the eastern and southern portions of Ukraine on Tuesday, the general staff of Ukraine’s armed forces said. Via air attacks and missile strikes and high mobility artillery rocket systems, Russian force attacked settlements in the Luhansk oblast and the Donetsk oblast in the east, and the Dnipropetrovsk, Mykolaiv and Cherkasy oblasts in the south. • Russia covertly spent more than \$300m since 2014 to try to influence politicians and other officials in more than two dozen countries, according to declassified cables released by the US. Antony Blinken, the US secretary of state, has said he is concerned Russia could try to “stir the pot” in the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia in order to distract from Ukraine. He added that Russia could also use its influence in the region to help “calm the waters”.
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HEADLINE	09/13 Index wildfire evacuation order eased
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/index-evacuation-order-eased-residents-allowed-home-amid-bolt-creek-fire/
GIST	<p>Residents of the small Snohomish County town of Index were allowed to return home Tuesday evening, as officials eased a wildfire evacuation order that had been in place since Saturday.</p> <p>The Bolt Creek fire, which ignited Saturday and spread rapidly through the foothills of the western Cascades, covers more than 9,000 acres and is 5% contained. A 17-mile stretch of Highway 2 remains closed, and state transportation officials said they had no estimate for when the road would reopen.</p> <p>Snohomish County emergency officials just before 5 p.m. Tuesday shifted Index from a Level 3 evacuation order, meaning residents should leave immediately, to a Level 2 order, meaning they should be set to leave at a moment’s notice.</p> <p>A stretch of Highway 2 just east of Index, covering the communities of Baring and Grotto, remains under a Level 3 evacuation order.</p> <p>Power was restored Tuesday afternoon to the town of Skykomish. Puget Sound Energy had preemptively cut off power Saturday out of fear power lines could spark more fires.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/13 Smoke, fire season among lightest in 2022?
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SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/seattles-2022-smoke-and-fire-season-likely-to-be-among-our-lightest/
GIST	<p>Was that it for this year's smoke and wildfire season?</p> <p>Probably yes, say those keeping track. And if so, we're lucky.</p> <p>Despite the recent wind-whipped fires in Western Washington that forced evacuations, sent hikers fleeing and blanketed Seattle and the region with smoke, the state is seeing its third-lightest wildfire season in a decade, according to the Washington State Department of Natural Resources.</p> <p>So far this year about 42,000 acres have burned in 530 fires on DNR land. That's the third-lowest tally in a decade, said Thomas Kyle-Milward, the department's communications manager for wildfire. "This has been a very, very quiet year, and with weather models predicting a downward glide in terms of fire weather conditions, we're sitting really pretty," he said.</p> <p>Our long, wet spring is largely responsible, he said. Wet springs can be a double-edged sword, making things grow but also creating more potential fuel. But this year, temperatures didn't start heating up until June, so there wasn't quite enough time for the fuel to fully cure, he said.</p> <p>On Tuesday, evacuations and road closures remained in place at the Bolt Creek fire, which covered 9,440 acres and was reported to be 5% contained. The fire grew about 2,000 acres from Monday but still remained almost entirely north of the shuttered Highway 2. Most of the growth was new burning within the interior of the fire, rather than an expanding perimeter, officials said.</p> <p>Index residents were allowed to return home Tuesday evening, as the town was shifted from a Level 3 evacuation order to a Level 2. Level 3 means residents should evacuate immediately, while Level 2 means they should be set to leave at a moment's notice.</p> <p>A stretch of Highway 2 covering the communities of Baring and Grotto remains under a Level 3 evacuation order. And the highway itself is still closed for a roughly 17-mile stretch from Gold Bar to Skykomish.</p> <p>The Washington State Department of Transportation said it had no estimate for when the highway would reopen.</p> <p>A lot of the work along the highway Tuesday was to remove potential hazard trees, those that had been damaged or weakened by fire or by firefighting, said Rachel Lipsky, a spokesperson for Northwest Incident Management Team 8.</p> <p>"We can't reopen roads if we've got dead, dying trees that could fall on people that are driving," Lipsky said. "We really have to make sure that stretch of road is safe."</p> <p>Firefighters were working to use the highway and smaller forest roads as containment lines to limit the fire's spread, and the blaze had crossed Highway 2 at only one point, burning on top of the Money Creek Tunnel between Skykomish and Grotto.</p> <p>Firefighters on Tuesday performed tactical burns on both sides of the tunnel to reduce available fuel and preserve the highway as a containment line. They also used heavy equipment to clear brush and potential fuel from along forest roads on the east and west sides of the blaze so the roads could be used as fire lines.</p> <p>The north edge of the fire is "pretty inaccessible," Lipsky said, with very steep terrain in a wilderness area. Power also was restored to the town of Skykomish on Tuesday afternoon. Puget Sound Energy had preemptively cut it off Saturday, out of fear power lines could spark more fires.</p> <p>South of Mount Rainier, meanwhile, the Goat Rocks fire was 0% contained and still burning on 3,096 acres.</p>

Wildfire and [smoke season has become an unofficial part of the Puget Sound region's calendar](#) since 2012, when area fires ramped up from covering 19,930 acres in 2011 to 228,452, said Kyle-Milward, who each year tabulates fire statistics across various state and federal agencies involved in wildfire management.

"Since then, we've never had less than 150,000 acres burn," he said.

Many of the 2012 blazes were sparked by a September lightning storm that set off hundreds of fires across the east side of the Cascade Mountains. Smoke caused hazardous air quality conditions in Ellensburg and Wenatchee and was noticeable in Seattle.

On Aug. 19, 2015, three firefighters were killed and [one was gravely injured](#) battling a wildfire near Twisp. That fire was part of the [Okanogan Complex fire](#), one of the largest wildfires in Washington state history, along with the 2014 Carlton Complex fire, which burned over 304,782 acres.

In 2017, the Puget Sound region was covered with [smoke from hundreds of fires in British Columbia](#) for more than a week.

In 2020, rare, high-powered eastern windstorms over [Labor Day weekend started fires](#) in California, Oregon and Washington, sending heavy smoke and poor air quality up and down the West Coast. Until then, it had been a good fire season. But the winds "took a very dry landscape and made it into a hellscape," Kyle-Milward said.

Though 2021's fire season didn't bring wildfire and smoke to Seattle's doorstep, it started early — with 220 DNR fires by April, an agency record — and lasted until the rain came. Fire and thick, choking smoke threatened livelihoods as well as some of Seattle's [favorite recreational areas in Methow Valley towns](#).

It could have been a "poster for what climate change has done to fire seasons," Kyle-Milward said. "It takes them from seasons and turns them into fire years."

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HEADLINE	09/13 Weyerhaeuser WA, OR workers strike
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/money/business/weyerhaeuser-workers-strike-washington-oregon/281-0db4897d-36bb-4fed-8aba-ac2a19292798
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — A worker strike is impacting Weyerhaeuser's operations in Washington and Oregon.</p> <p>The Washington-based company announced a work stoppage involving members of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers union on Tuesday. Weyerhaeuser has about 1,200 union members, which includes employees in the company's Wood Products and Timberlands organization.</p> <p>In a prepared statement, Denise Merle, senior vice president and chief administration officer for the company, said they have been "formally engaged" in bargaining with the union since May. The company, according to the statement, has made "several offers related to wages and benefits."</p> <p>"After we presented our final offer, IAM workers at multiple sites went on strike late last night," Merle said. "While we are very disappointed in their decision to walk out, we are committed to supporting our employees and negotiating in good faith with union representatives. We are prepared to continue discussions to produce a contract that is beneficial for employees and sustainable for the company across business cycles."</p> <p>Workers on a picket line in Washington told KING 5 they are striking for better healthcare and wages. Every department, they said, is on strike.</p>

	<p>According to a letter from the union, negotiations with Weyerhaeuser began in April for a new collective bargaining agreement that expired May 31.</p> <p>Weyerhaeuser, according to the union's letter, presented a proposal on Aug. 19. The proposal included "a number of improvements," but "came nowhere close to what our members wanted or deserve." The offer was rejected by union members.</p> <p>The strike is the first since 1986.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/13 WSP: 24,000 litter items per highway mile
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/state-launches-new-campaign-to-try-to-keep-litter-of-freewayhighways
GIST	<p>SEATTLE -- You've probably noticed there's a lot of trash piling up along freeways and highways across the state.</p> <p>We're not talking about the debris from homeless encampments but things like water bottles and cigarette butts that people throw out of their cars.</p> <p>State officials said it's a big and costly problem. According to preliminary results of a new statewide litter study, there are more than 24,000 litter items per mile on highways in the state's urban core, the Washington State Patrol (WSP) reported Monday in a news release.</p> <p>"When the need continues to supersede the resources to address the need, then it's an escalation over time," said Chris Loftis with WSP.</p> <p>Loftis said the state spends about \$9 million on cleanup efforts each year.</p> <p>Pickup crews and volunteers have collected about 1,000 tons of garbage so far this year - about 350 tons in July alone, according to statistics provided by the state. That's a small fraction of what's tossed on the road.</p> <p>Some of the debris can have deadly consequences. In March, a mattress flew off a truck on Interstate 5 near Mountlake Terrace, which lead to another driver's death, investigators said.</p> <p>"It's dangerous. It's ugly. It's expensive," Loftis said.</p> <p>The state is launching a new bilingual campaign called "Simple As That" to get drivers to change their behaviors. The behavior suggestions include keeping a litter bag in your car, holding onto your trash until you can throw it away at a gas station, a rest area, or at home, and making better choices about what you use – like reusable cups instead of plastic bottles.</p> <p>"We live in one of the most beautiful parts of the world," Loftis said. "And so we have a choice. And the choice is to either keep it clean or keep it cluttered."</p> <p>Loftis said troopers only stop about 500 people per year for littering violations. They instead focus more of their attention on speeders, distracted drivers, and responding to crashes with the limited resources that they have.</p> <p>Littering can lead to fines of up to \$5,000 depending on the circumstances, Loftis said.</p> <p>Littering is a problem that many believe has only gotten worse since the pandemic began.</p> <p>"We're just seeing a degradation," Loftis told KOMO News. "More and more people are deciding that litter doesn't matter. Well, we've got to remind them – it does matter and it's just that simple."</p>

	As part of the state's new campaign, it is giving away free litter bags at all Fred Meyer stores statewide while supplies last.
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HEADLINE	09/13 Grant Co. confirms monkeypox case
SOURCE	https://www.krem.com/article/news/health/monkeypox/monkeypox-case-confirmed-grant-county/293-769e555d-ad62-4430-a330-7ea99d5d701f
GIST	<p>GRANT COUNTY, Wash. — The Grant County Health District (GCHD) has announced its first confirmed case of monkeypox.</p> <p>According to the health district, the infected patient is in good health and is currently at home in quarantine. At this time, GCHD is working to identify if others have been exposed.</p> <p>In a press release, the district said that no one who was exposed is considered a possible positive case. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said brief interactions that do not involve physical contact and healthcare interactions using protective equipment are not considered high-risk exposures.</p> <p>Symptoms of the monkeypox virus include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fever • Headache • Muscle aches • Respiratory symptoms • Swollen lymph nodes • Chills • Exhaustion • Rash that can look like pimples or blisters that appear on the face, inside the mouth, and on other body parts <p>The virus can be spread in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct contact with the infectious rash, scabs, or body fluids • Respiratory secretions during prolonged, face-to-face contact, or during intimate physical contact, such as kissing, cuddling, or sex • Touching items (such as clothing or linens) that previously touched the infectious rash or body fluids • Pregnant people can spread the virus to their fetus through the placenta
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HEADLINE	09/13 Seattle police staffing drops to 30-yr low
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/seattle-police-staffing-drops-to-30-year-low-officers-leaving-in-droves-after-defunding
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - The president of the Washington State Fraternal Order of Police said Tuesday that "enough is enough" as Seattle struggles with its lowest police staffing in 30 years.</p> <p>Marco Montebalanco said he believes officers are retiring and resigning at higher rates because the profession has been demonized in recent years.</p> <p>On "Fox & Friends First" Tuesday, Montebalanco pointed to Seattle's history of defunding police and continued lack of support from media and local officials for an underappreciated police force.</p> <p>"They're frustrated, and they're leaving their departments in droves," Montebalanco told hosts Carley Shimkus and Todd Piro.</p> <p>The strain on police is a nationwide issue, with more than 1,000 New York City police officers filing to leave the department in 2022. Some of those officers retire before their full pensions take effect.</p>

	<p>"What are we doing?" Monteblando asked. "When officers are not on the road, inherently crime rates go up."</p> <p>He acknowledged that a majority of people in the Seattle community support the police and are against defunding, but such policies continue to alienate officers.</p> <p>Monteblando said officers are also feeling increasingly discouraged by the judicial system that doesn't provide proper accountability for criminals.</p> <p>"All they want to do is to protect the public," he said. "Officers get frustrated because all they want to do is support the victims that they're trying to help."</p> <p>He warned that crime will continue to skyrocket in Seattle as more officers are set to retire than are being hired.</p> <p>While Monteblando conceded that politicians are beginning to realize the negative impact of their soft-on-crime policies, he emphasized the need for more resources for public safety.</p> <p>"We need support," he pleaded to the public.</p> <p>"Right now it's time to act," he said. "We need citizens to contact their local officials. Demand that they provide tools and resources to the brave men and women who risk their lives on a daily basis on behalf of the citizens of their communities."</p>
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HEADLINE	09/13 US: Russia in global elections interference
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/13/us/politics/russia-election-interference.html
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — Russia has covertly given at least \$300 million to political parties, officials and politicians in more than two dozen countries since 2014, and plans to transfer hundreds of millions more, with the goal of exerting political influence and swaying elections, according to a State Department summary of a recent U.S. intelligence review.</p> <p>Russia has probably given even more that has gone undetected, the document said.</p> <p>“The Kremlin and its proxies have transferred these funds in an effort to shape foreign political environments in Moscow’s favor,” the document said. It added, “The United States will use official liaison channels with targeted countries to share still classified information about Russian activities targeting their political environments.”</p> <p>The State Department document was sent as a cable to American embassies around the world on Monday to summarize talking points for U.S. diplomats in conversations with foreign officials.</p> <p>Ned Price, the State Department spokesman, confirmed at a news conference on Tuesday that the findings on Russia were the result of work by U.S. intelligence agencies. He added that Russian election meddling was “an assault on sovereignty,” similar to Russia’s war on Ukraine. “In order to fight this, in many ways we have to put a spotlight on it,” he said.</p> <p>The State Department cable and release of some of the intelligence findings amount to an initial effort by the Biden administration to use intelligence material to expose the scope of Russian interference in global political processes and elections, and to rally other nations to help combat it.</p> <p>U.S. intelligence agencies have determined that Russia interfered in the 2016 presidential election in favor of Donald J. Trump, the Republican candidate who defeated Hillary Clinton, the Democratic nominee. Its methods included the use of cyberoperations to spread online disinformation. U.S. intelligence officials</p>

also found that President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia [authorized a campaign](#) to try to hurt the candidacy of Joseph R. Biden Jr. when he ran for office against Mr. Trump in 2020.

The new document says that a range of Russian agencies and individuals carry out the global operations, including the Federal Security Service and other security agencies, as well as business figures.

The document named two men, [Yevgeny Prigozhin](#) and Aleksandr Babakov, both close associates of Mr. Putin, as involved in the influence or interference campaigns. In April, the Justice Department charged Mr. Babakov, who is also a Russian lawmaker, and two other Russian citizens with conspiring to violate U.S. sanctions and conspiring to commit visa fraud while running an “international foreign influence and disinformation network to advance the interests of Russia.”

The Russians pay in cash, cryptocurrency, electronic funds transfers and lavish gifts, the document said. They move the money through a wide range of institutions to shield the origins of the financing, a practice called using cutouts. Those institutions include foundations, think tanks, organized crime groups, political consultancies, shell companies and Russian state-owned enterprises.

The money is also given secretly through Russian Embassy accounts and resources, the document said. In one Asian country, the Russian ambassador gave millions of dollars in cash to a presidential candidate, the document said. U.S. agencies have also found that Russia has used false contracts and shell companies in several European countries in recent years to give money to political parties.

“Some of Russia’s covert political financing methods are especially prevalent in certain parts of the world,” the document said. It added, “Russia has relied on state-owned enterprises and large firms to move funds covertly across a number of regions including Central America, Asia, the Middle East and North Africa, and on think tanks and foundations that are especially active across Europe.”

As of last year, the document said, a Russian business figure was trying to use pro-Russian think tanks in Europe to support far-right nationalist parties. The document warned that in the coming months, Russia might use its “covert influence tool kit,” including secret political financing, across broad swaths of the globe to try to undermine the American-led sanctions on Russia and to “maintain its influence in these regions amid its ongoing war in Ukraine.”

Although U.S. intelligence agencies have been studying Russian global election interference and influence for years, the intelligence review was ordered by senior administration officials this summer, U.S. officials said. Some of the findings were recently declassified so they could be shared widely. The review did not examine Russian interference in U.S. elections, which intelligence agencies had been scrutinizing in other inquiries, a U.S. official said.

Officials say one aim of the U.S. campaign to reveal details about Russian political interference and influence is to [strengthen democratic resilience](#) around the world, a pillar of President Biden’s foreign policy. Administration officials are focused on ensuring that nations that took part in last year’s Summit for Democracy, which Mr. Biden held in Washington, can buttress their democratic systems. The administration plans to convene a second summit soon.

The State Department summary listed measures that the United States and partner nations could take to mitigate Russia’s political interference campaigns, including imposing economic sanctions and travel bans on known “financial enablers” and “influence actors.”

The department also recommended that countries coordinate intelligence sharing, improve foreign investment screening, strengthen investigative capabilities into foreign financing of political parties and campaigns, and enforce and expand foreign agent registration rules.

It said governments should also expel Russian intelligence officers found to be taking part in related covert financing operations.

	The State Department said in the summary that it was urging governments to guard against covert political financing “not just by Russia, but also by China and other countries imitating this behavior.”
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HEADLINE	09/13 Markets plunge on inflation data
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/13/business/markets-inflation-stocks.html
GIST	<p>Stocks plummeted and government bond yields soared on Tuesday, as investors were once again caught off guard by the persistence of inflation in the United States and quickly shifted their views on what the Federal Reserve may need to do to combat rising prices.</p> <p>It was the latest in a string of surprises that have undercut investors’ optimism and left them rapidly adjusting to a more gloomy outlook on the path for interest rates and the economy.</p> <p>Consumer prices in the U.S. rose 8.3 percent in the year through August, a report showed on Tuesday, cutting against economists’ expectations and throwing doubt over the belief that inflation had peaked.</p> <p>The S&P 500, which had been trading higher in the hours before the data was released, slumped 4.3 percent by the end of the day, its biggest drop since the depths of the coronavirus pandemic in June 2020. The slide stood in stark contrast to gains in recent days. The index had climbed about 5 percent in the week leading up to the report, as investors had increasingly bet that the Fed would be able to cool inflation without tipping the economy into a severe downturn.</p> <p>But the faster-than-expected inflation numbers showed that broad-based price pressures remain. Every sector in the S&P 500 index fell as investors reconsidered how much the Fed may need to raise interest rates, which makes borrowing more expensive for consumers and companies. The Nasdaq Composite stock index, which is full of tech stocks that are seen as more sensitive to rising interest rates, fell 5.2 percent, its worst day since June 2020.</p> <p>“We are not out of the woods yet,” said Luke Tilley, the chief economist at Wilmington Trust. “We can’t even see the edge of the woods from here.”</p> <p>Following Tuesday’s drop, the S&P 500 sits 17.5 percent below where it started the year and about 7 percent higher than its low point in June.</p> <p>The day’s turmoil was another upset for investors in a summer characterized by choppy trading and shifting expectations. Better-than-expected earnings, along with some signs that inflation may have peaked, had helped lift stock prices in July and early August. Then, Fed officials, including the central bank’s chair, Jerome H. Powell, warned that the fight against inflation was not over and that interest rates still needed to move markedly higher, pulling stock prices lower again.</p> <p>More recently, with a sense that the Fed’s message had been received and that a higher path forward for interest rates had been accounted for, stocks began to rise again. Even before the inflation data was released, investors had come to expect another big rate increase, of three-quarters of a percentage point, when the Fed meets next week.</p> <p>Expectations are shifting again. Some investors are even starting to price in the possibility that the central bank could lift interest rates by a full percentage point, increasing borrowing costs by the most since 1984. Among them is the Japanese bank Nomura, which in just the past week has shifted from predicting the Fed would lift rates by half a percentage point, to three quarters, to a full point on Tuesday.</p> <p>“We continue to believe markets underappreciate just how entrenched U.S. inflation has become and the magnitude of response that will likely be required from the Fed to dislodge it,” the analysts wrote in a research report.</p>

The yield on the two-year Treasury note, a measure of government borrowing costs that is sensitive to changes in the expected path of interest rates, shot higher after the inflation numbers were released, rising above 3.75 percent, a fresh high for the year.

And the U.S. dollar, which had weakened for days against a basket of currencies representing major U.S. trading partners, swiftly strengthened on Tuesday, gaining 1.4 percent. Stock markets were down across Asia on Wednesday morning.

Mike Pond, the head of global inflation-linked research at Barclays, said the surprising inflation data had not altered his view that the Fed would raise rates by three-quarters of a percentage point next week.

“But we do think it will change the tone of what they are going to do going forward,” he said. “This will leave the Fed more concerned.”

Futures prices that reflect investors’ changing expectations for where interest rates will be at the end of the year have quickly jumped higher. They’re now predicting an upper limit of 4.25 percent, adding an additional quarter-point to previous forecasts and meaning the Fed is expected to raise interest rates another 1.75 percentage points over the next three months.

Some bankers and investors clung to expectations that even with a more rapid pace of rate increases, the Fed may yet stick a so-called soft landing, lowering inflation but avoiding recession. Yet there is also acknowledgment that the Fed’s task has been made harder by stubbornly high inflation.

Solid data on the labor market earlier this month, which pointed to the resiliency of the economy after several rate increases this year, also highlights the challenge of slowing inflation at the same time as unemployment remains low, bolstering consumer spending.

It means that current positive signals for the U.S. economy may perversely foretell more pain to come, said Lauren Goodwin, an economist at New York Life Investments.

“The longer the economy holds on, the longer household balance sheets can withstand these high prices, the more aggressive the Fed has to be in the future,” she said. “Investors were getting too comfortable with the idea that inflationary pressures were easing.”

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HEADLINE	09/13 Inflation uncomfortably high in August
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/09/13/business/inflation-cpi-report#inflation-cpi-federal-reserve
GIST	<p>Inflation remained uncomfortably rapid in August despite a decline in gas costs as prices continued to soar across a broad array of other goods and services, evidence that the sustainable slowdown the Federal Reserve and White House have been hoping for remains elusive.</p> <p>Prices rose 8.3 percent from a year earlier compared to 8.5 percent in July, a fresh Consumer Price Index report released Tuesday showed, a still-rapid pace of increase and not as much of a moderation as economists had expected. The disappointing data came even as falling gas prices pulled inflation lower, with rapidly rising costs for rent, health care, restaurant meals and goods such as furniture offsetting the relief consumers were feeling at the fuel pump.</p> <p>Compounding the bad news, a core index that strips out gas and food to get a sense of underlying inflation trends accelerated by more than was expected.</p> <p>For policymakers at the Federal Reserve, who have been raising interest rates to slow the economy and try to tame recent rapid inflation, the report was a fresh sign that price increases have yet to come back under control — and that continued aggressive action may be needed to wrestle them lower.</p>

Economists said that the Consumer Price Index data cemented the case for a third straight, unusually large three-quarter percentage point Fed rate increase at the central bank's meeting next week, and stocks swooned as investors began to speculate that officials could opt for an even more drastic full percentage point adjustment.

"Inflation remains hot, financial conditions have seen some improvement and the labor markets are humming along," Neil Dutta, head of U.S. economics at Renaissance Macro, wrote in a research note following the release. "If the goal is to slow things down and create some pain, the Fed is failing by its own standard."

The Fed closely watches the core inflation gauge, making its rebound in August a point of particular concern. After cutting out food and fuel, consumer prices climbed by 6.3 percent in the year through last month, up from 5.9 percent in July and more than the 6.1 percent economists had projected.

Even looking at overall inflation, the report's details offered plenty to worry about.

Two products that have been major drivers of inflation over the past year — gas and used cars — are now posting outright price cuts. But other goods and services are picking up in price so much that it is more than offsetting those declines. Prices climbed by 0.1 percent over the course of the past month amid rapid price increases for a broad array of products and services, including food away from home, new cars, dental care and vehicle repair.

The upshot is that inflation has plenty of underlying momentum.

That is likely to keep the Fed firmly in inflation-fighting mode. Central bankers are waiting for a sustained slowdown in price increases to convince them that their policies are working to cool demand and nudge the economy back toward a healthy environment in which inflation is slow, steady and barely noticeable. Until that happens, officials have [pledged to keep](#) raising interest rates, moves that can slow borrowing, constrain consumer demand and tamp down hiring and wage growth.

"Inflation is far too high, and it is too soon to say whether inflation is moving meaningfully and persistently downward," Christopher Waller, a Fed governor, said in a speech last week. "This is a fight we cannot, and will not, walk away from."

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HEADLINE	09/13 Inflation: good, bad, uncertainties
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/09/13/business/inflation-cpi-report#cpi-inflation-explained
GIST	<p>Inflation in the United States has been cooling on an annual basis over recent months as a result of falling gasoline prices, but economists are looking for more evidence that the slowdown in price increases will become widespread and pronounced.</p> <p>So far, that has yet to happen — and in fact important signs point in the other direction. Price increases across an array of products and services, from couches to restaurant meals and rent, continued to climb in August even as consumers received relief at the gas pump.</p> <p>That's likely to leave policymakers searching for hints that a broader decline could be coming. As they do, here are a few positive developments, a couple of worrying ones and a big, looming uncertainty that analysts will be paying close attention to in the months ahead.</p> <p>Good News</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gas and other commodities. Falling prices at the gas pump have been pulling down annual inflation, and some food commodity prices have also been easing, which could eventually seep through to retail prices. That would be good news for consumers, who tend to be sensitive to transportation and grocery costs. But for now, food costs continue to climb sharply as commodity cost spikes from earlier this year continue to feed through to grocery aisles.

For Federal Reserve officials, lower gas and food prices would be a welcome, but not decisive, development. Because those costs jump up and down, central bankers tend to look past them when trying to get a sense of where inflation is headed.

- **Cars and other physical products.** A more meaningful positive development is taking place in goods prices, some of which are showing early signs of cooling off. Notably, price increases for used cars, which helped drive the pop in inflation that began last year, are beginning to pull back — falling 0.1 percent over the past month.

Goods inflation might continue to ease because consumers are shifting their spending away from products they snapped up during the pandemic and back toward services, like restaurant dinners and vacations. And it could be helped by a clearing up in supply chain issues, which have plagued producers for more than a year but have [shown recent signs of abating](#), though they are not fully back to normal.

Bad News

- **Services tied to the labor market.** Even as price increases for some goods ease, services prices — including the cost of eating out or hiring child care — have been picking up quickly. The cost of food away from home climbed by an unusually rapid 0.9 percent between July and August, for instance. Big increases in such service categories could be poised to continue, because their prices are closely linked to wages, which have been climbing notably as a result of a strong job market with low unemployment and worker shortages that span many fields.
- **Rent.** The most important service category is rent-related costs, which count for nearly a third of overall inflation and which continued a steep ascent in August. For the time being, economists expect housing costs to continue increasing sharply. There are [too few apartments](#) to go around, especially as renters shy away from buying homes amid rising mortgage rates. And a big run-up in rents over the past year is still slowly feeding into inflation.

Uncertainties

- **War and disruption risk.** Economists [have repeatedly predicted](#) that inflation was about to decelerate only to have those expectations scuppered. With war in Ukraine still stoking uncertainty about supply chains and commodity markets, central bankers may be slow to declare victory on inflation. And even if price increases begin to pull back, a key question is: How much will inflation slow?

“The bigger question for the Fed is not: Has inflation peaked? It’s: What’s the destination?” said Aneta Markowska, chief financial economist at Jeffries. She thinks that without a notable slowdown in economic growth, it will be difficult to get annual price gains back under 4 percent. That would be far higher than the 2 percent annual average that the Fed aims for.

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HEADLINE	09/13 Posing a problem: rapidly rising rents
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/09/13/business/inflation-cpi-report#rapidly-rising-rents-could-pose-a-problem-for-the-fed
GIST	<p>One reason to worry that inflation won’t abate anytime soon: rapidly rising rents.</p> <p>The Labor Department’s measure of rent was up 6.7 percent in August from a year earlier, the fastest rate since the mid-1980s. And the increases are accelerating: Over the past three months, rents have risen 2.2 percent, the equivalent of a 9.2 annual rate.</p> <p>Those figures might sound low to anyone who’s signed a new lease lately, given that tenants in many cities are facing double-digit percent rent increases. That’s partly because the Labor Department’s measure tries to capture how fast rents are rising for everyone, not just people signing new leases.</p>

	<p>That approach means that the rent price index usually moves slowly — but once it starts moving, it tends to keep going. And because housing is such a big component of total spending, if rents keep rising quickly, it will be hard for the Fed to bring overall inflation down to its 2 percent target.</p> <p>The acceleration in rents reflects a broader shift in inflation dynamics in recent months. When prices first began rising rapidly last year, the problem was concentrated in the goods sector, reflecting supply chain disruptions that made it hard for automakers and other manufacturers to meet strong demand. More recently, goods inflation has begun to ebb, but that decline is being offset, at least in part, by faster inflation in services, including housing.</p> <p>Numbers from private data sources have shown some moderation in the prices landlords are asking for available apartments in recent months, which should eventually filter through to the government's rent index. But there are also forces pushing in the opposite direction. Higher interest rates are making it harder for people to buy homes, which is driving up demand for rental units and keeping prices high. Rents also tend to track wages, which have continued to rise as the labor market has remained strong.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/13 Grocery prices jump: pinching consumers
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/09/13/business/inflation-cpi-report#a-jump-in-grocery-prices-is-pinching-consumers
GIST	<p>Food prices continued to rise in August, increasing by 0.8 percent from July, and fueling a larger than expected increase in inflation last month.</p> <p>Food prices in August were up 11.4 percent from the same month a year ago. Food inflation in the United States has risen to its highest level in more than 40 years this year, driven by trends both within the United States and abroad. Farmers and grocers have had to pay higher prices for gasoline, worker wages and packaging, which they have in turn passed on to their consumers.</p> <p>In August, prices for groceries rose 0.7 percent, while the prices for restaurant meals accelerated more quickly, rising 0.9 percent from the month before. Cereals and bakery products were up 1.2 percent from July. Meats, poultry, fish and eggs rose 0.5 percent.</p> <p>Among the foods with the biggest price increases last month were white bread, doughnuts, hot dogs, potatoes, tomatoes and canned fruits.</p> <p>In the last year, the cost of eating at home has grown 13.5 percent, the sharpest increase since 1979. The cost of dining out is up 8 percent from August 2021.</p> <p>A bout of bird flu earlier this year made chickens and eggs scarce, driving up the prices of both. Droughts in key agricultural regions, like the Western United States and in Brazil, have pushed up the prices of foods like grains and coffee, as has the Russian invasion of Ukraine, a major producer of wheat and sunflower oil.</p> <p>More turmoil could be in store for global food markets. Last week, Russian President Vladimir V. Putin sowed fresh doubt about the future of arrangements that have allowed grains to be exported from Ukraine, pushing up the price of wheat globally. Last Thursday, India also banned exports of one kind of rice and put a tax on others, in an effort to shore up supplies and fight domestic inflation.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/13 Police little info after deadly encounters?
SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/article265049329.html
GIST	Last month, two people died in Tacoma following public, disruptive incidents involving local law enforcement agencies. Police released little information, if any, regarding the deaths until the next day.

On the morning of Aug. 10, social media posts from witnesses and others alerted The News Tribune to an incident involving state troopers who used less-than-lethal weapons on a motorist who crashed into a building around 7:40 p.m. the night before. Officials did not confirm eyewitness accounts provided to The News Tribune that the man had died until issuing a news release several hours later.

In the Aug. 28 case, it was Tacoma Mayor Victoria Woodards, not a police agency, who announced a man was killed in a shooting with officers several hours earlier. A mayor's office spokesperson told The News Tribune that Woodards thought the community should be aware of the incident after she conferred with City Manager Elizabeth Pauli. Police say Chief Avery Moore informed Pauli of the fatality but did not speak with the mayor.

Some people who monitor police agencies said delayed communications about deadly encounters damages relationships between law enforcement and the public. They also said a lack of communication can contribute to rumors and misinformation.

"Part of their job is to inform us about what's taking place. And when they don't, it harms us and erodes the trust that the police so desperately want from the community," said Anwar Peace, a member of the Spokane Human Rights Commission and former police accountability activist in Seattle.

For under-served communities, "it continues perceptions that they don't matter," said Leslie Cushman, an attorney and member of the Washington Coalition for Police Accountability.

Cushman was the citizen sponsor of Initiative 940, a 2018 campaign to build trust between law enforcement and the public around police use of force. It aimed to institute safeguards for the credibility of investigations while also prioritizing transparency and communication.

After Washington state law mandating independent deadly force investigations went into effect in 2020, legal experts and Washington law enforcement officials told The News Tribune, some agencies became hesitant to release information about deadly encounters out of concern they'd violate rules barring their involvement in outside probes or appear to be withholding key details from the public.

"We were trying to make sure the involved agency was not interjecting any bias into the (investigative) process, but that needs to be balanced with keeping the public informed," Cushman said. She added, "We did not anticipate that law enforcement agencies would default to sharing no information."

In Pierce County, law enforcement officials created a system where local agencies handle public communications for deadly force incidents they are not involved in, except for in extenuating circumstances, such as when a public information officer from an uninvolved agency isn't available. In those cases, the Pierce County Force Investigation Team, or PCFIT, might ask a spokesperson for the involved agency to communicate with the public.

Law enforcement agencies in the Spokane area have a different strategy. Before an outside agency takes over, a department involved in a use of deadly force will notify the public the same way it would during a major crime or traffic collision.

"When we're an involved agency, we want to supply that information to the people we serve," Spokane County Sheriff's Office spokesperson Cpl. Mark Gregory told The News Tribune.

A February editorial from The News Tribune was critical of PCFIT's transparency and communication, particularly in relation to naming involved officers.

Since then, Lakewood Police Chief Mike Zaro, who chairs PCFIT's executive board, said that the regional investigative team has generally released information about deadly force incidents in accordance with its internal guidelines: about 24 hours for an initial news release and within two weeks for the names of officers.

“A day after is pretty quick,” the Lakewood chief told The News Tribune recently. “With all the moving parts, I think it is working well.”

A new statewide civilian Office of Independent Investigations was slated to take deadly force probes out of law enforcement’s hands in July, but the director, who was appointed in May, is still building his staff.

“I’m looking forward to the new state agency’s work because it will not be hampered by the same conflicts of interest,” said Cushman. In the meantime, PCFIT remains the authority on deadly police force in Pierce County.

SHOTS FIRED IN SOUTH TACOMA

Just before 3 p.m. on Aug. 28, Tacoma police officers reported that an assault suspect was shooting at them in the 6700 block of South Monroe Street, according to PCFIT.

Police had arrived about 40 minutes earlier in response to a 911 call from a man who reported his uncle had fought with him. Although he didn’t use a weapon, the man said his uncle had access to guns and might shoot police.

The suspect, later identified as 40-year-old Peter T. Collins, refused to come out of the house after police gathered enough evidence to arrest him, according to PCFIT.

Dispatch recordings indicate an exchange of gunfire ensued. Collins died of a rifle wound to the chest a block west of the house he was holed up in.

Law enforcement shut down about four square blocks.

In an interview for this story, Tacoma police spokesperson Wendy Haddow told The News Tribune she learned about the shooting from news media calling her on her day off. She had little information to give reporters and stopped her inquiries after a Tacoma lieutenant at the scene told her that PCFIT had been activated.

“You have to have that line of separation,” Haddow told The News Tribune.

The incident received little media attention that afternoon with only scant details from Haddow to report. “Officers responded. An officer-involved shooting occurred. Investigation turned over to PCFIT,” Haddow told The News Tribune in a brief statement the Monday morning after the mayor’s announcement of a fatality on Sunday night.

Haddow said the threat from the shooting was over by the time she learned about it. With so many officers at the scene, she concluded that roads would be blocked off and determined there was no need to tell the community to avoid the area. The Tacoma police spokesperson said she assumed a PCFIT news release was on the way.

Haddow didn’t learn someone died until later in the day and wasn’t privy to conversations between the chief, city manager and mayor, she told The News Tribune. She said she gave city officials the same information about the shooting as she gave local media, but the mayor’s office did not ask her to review Woodards’ statement.

“PCFIT normally has a press release out sooner than they did,” said Haddow, who referred to the Aug. 28 case as a “one-off.”

Zaro told The News Tribune that nothing prohibits agencies involved in uses of force from releasing initial information to the public.

So the delay in alerting the public about the shooting or that someone had died?

“That’s not a PCFIT breakdown,” Zaro said.

MAN DIES IN TROOPERS’ CUSTODY

The Aug. 9 incident began about 7:40 p.m. when a trooper attempted to stop a truck in the 3700 block of Pacific Avenue that had nearly hit a pedestrian and ran a red light, according to PCFIT. The trooper believed the driver was severely impaired. The driver either jumped or was ejected from the truck as it turned onto 84th Street then crashed through a light pole and into the wall of a gas station.

Troopers said the driver was waving around a knife. PCFIT said the man did not comply with police commands, and Tacoma police assisted troopers in arresting him. Police radio traffic indicated officers fired a bean bag round and shocked him with a Taser to subdue him.

The man allegedly kicked at law enforcement and firefighters who were providing medical aid, according to PCFIT. Within a few minutes, the man stopped breathing, and he died after more than 30 minutes of CPR.

Nearly a month passed before PCFIT released the names of the five state troopers and Tacoma police officer who were involved.

“That is completely unacceptable,” said Peace, the Spokane activist. Peace said waiting more than a few days to release officers’ names is inappropriate. The identities of police can tell the public if an officer was connected to a prior use of force or disciplinary investigation.

The Pierce County Medical Examiner’s Office released the name of the 35-year-old man who died last week but has not determined a cause of death. The family of Ronald Hasek told The News Tribune he struggled with mental illness.

TACOMA MAYOR MAKES A STATEMENT

A mayor’s office spokesperson did not elaborate on why Woodards, not city police, announced the Aug. 28 fatal shooting beyond the fact that PCFIT was handling the investigation.

“She just wanted to make sure that people who may have been concerned with the level of activity in the neighbor or just what happened knew that the city was aware and that it was being handled properly,” Bucoda Warren told The News Tribune this week.

The mayor’s office emailed the statement to news media at about 9:30 p.m., more than six hours after an apparent exchange of gunfire that ended a block east of where it began. The top priority for responding officers is to ensure a scene is safe, and TPD’s newer sergeants and lieutenants don’t always remember to call Haddow, the police spokesperson said.

Many times it’s reporters, not police officers, who alert her to large police responses. “It may not be the best system,” said Haddow, noting that a police supervisor can sometimes take 45 minutes to an hour to get to a scene and send her information.

Tacoma police have released initial information about deadly force incidents in the past when no PCFIT public information officer was available to respond, such as a fatal police shooting outside the Tacoma Mall in March. But Haddow says that only happens when PCFIT asks her to.

In those instances, PCFIT has sent her the copy of a news release for TPD to publish.

“I follow the direction of PCFIT when they advise to put one out,” Haddow said. It’s unclear whether PCFIT sharing information with Haddow for those news releases violates state law for independent investigations.

The Attorney General’s office and state auditor’s office declined to weigh in on a specific case. Haddow told The News Tribune it is compliant. Cushman, the I-940 sponsor, said the practice, at least, clashes with

the spirit of the law because it involves outside investigators coordinating with an agency involved in a use of force. Zaro, the Lakewood chief and PCFIT chair, said PCFIT is “not allowed to share any information with the involved agency.”

SPOKANE COUNTY’S FORCE INVESTIGATION TEAM

Spokane-area law enforcement had a head start on many Washington departments when I-940 passed in 2018.

The county sheriff and city police department had been operating a regional team for deadly force investigations going back a number of years. The makeup of the Spokane Independent Investigative Response Team, or SIIR, is nearly identical to PCFIT. The team includes the Spokane County Sheriff’s Office, Spokane Police Department and Washington State Patrol, as well as smaller jurisdictions that joined after the implementation of I-940 in 2020.

After a use of deadly force by a member agency, the uninvolved agencies confer to determine which of them has the resources to act as the “case-managing agency,” said Gregory, the Spokane sheriff’s spokesperson. That department takes the lead in coordinating investigative resources from other uninvolved agencies.

The system is similar to PCFIT’s use of incident commanders who marshal resources from departments across the region. SIIR’s protocol for notifying the public about uses of deadly force is different from Pierce County’s.

A Spokane-area agency involved in a use of deadly force issues an initial news release as it would for other significant public-safety incidents involving its officers. The involved department also releases the names of the involved officers, generally within a few days, according to Gregory.

“The point of having the involved agency do the initial [release] is so they’re responding to their public,” Gregory said. Separately, the uninvolved SIIR agencies coordinate what resources are available to begin investigating. SIIR publishes a news release within a few days of the incident, in addition to the weekly updates required by state law.

Cushman, the I-940 sponsor, said Spokane’s system is useful for getting information to the public quickly but that must be balanced with a need for involved agencies to be objective.

“Really, the benchmark is, ‘Am I interfering? Am I influencing?’” Cushman said.

Peace, the Spokane law enforcement activist, disagrees with SIIR’s practice of involved agencies releasing information because some details can appear to frame a use of force as justified and the might turn out to be incorrect.

“The lasting impression the public has is what the police narrative was originally,” Peace said. Ideally, Peace said, an outside agency would release public safety information about a use of deadly force — such as the time, location and details about injuries or ongoing danger — within hours of an incident.

“The turnaround time needs to be immediate because it’s a public safety issue,” Peace said of police shootings and in-custody deaths. Within the 24 to 48 hours, Peace said, outside agencies should release a fuller narrative and the identities of officers. Peace said independent deadly force investigation teams also should codify public communication timelines in policy to increase accountability.

PCFIT’S INVESTIGATIVE PROCESS

After I-940 first went into effect, the Pierce County Sheriff’s Department and Tacoma Police Department investigated one another’s deadly force incidents. Smaller jurisdictions, like Puyallup and Lakewood, formed a separate team with other cities and the Washington State Patrol.

All of Pierce County's agencies formed PCFIT during the summer of 2020, shortly after the state Attorney General's office announced a review of I-940 compliance in 30 cases and disclosure that the Pierce County Sheriff's Department was investigating the death of Manuel Ellis in Tacoma police custody despite a deputy being involved in restraining him. That inquiry found few agencies were fully compliant with I-940 regulations.

Pierce County agencies saw violations primarily related to transparency and communication.

Zaro, the Lakewood chief and PCFIT chair, provided The News Tribune with an overview of a general PCFIT response. When police use deadly force in Pierce County, officers notify South Sound 911 dispatchers. Dispatchers then start dialing numbers from the phone tree of four trained PCFIT commanders, each of them from the Sheriff's Department, Tacoma, Lakewood or Puyallup.

If a commander's agency was involved in the incident, they are excluded. There's no set rotation to assign commanders to cases. "It's whoever is available," said Zaro.

From there, PCFIT assigns detectives from any of the commanders' agencies, as well as a number of smaller departments, such as Gig Harbor and Bonney Lake. Some smaller PCFIT member agencies, like Fircrest, don't have trained investigators but provide other resources, such as traffic control for large crime scenes. PCFIT calls on spokespeople for three Pierce County law enforcement agencies — TPD's Haddow, Lakewood's Lt. Chris Lawler and sheriff's Sgt. Darren Moss — to work as public information officers, or PIOs, on cases not involving their own departments.

Those three agencies are involved in the majority of deadly force incidents in the county, which can leave PCFIT with only two spokespeople to choose from. In some cases, the PIOs from the uninvolved agencies are unavailable.

That's why Haddow, the Tacoma police spokesperson, sent out a news release about the fatal police shooting outside the Tacoma Mall in March. That's also why PIO duties for the Aug. 28 fatal shooting fell to Zaro, the Lakewood chief.

WSP'S INTERPRETATION OF I-940

State patrol officials met with the state Attorney General's office recently about public communication for deadly force incidents and I-940 compliance, according to Chris Loftis, a WSP spokesperson.

"We recognize there are incongruities in the interpretation of this regulation among various law enforcement agencies," Loftis wrote in an email statement to The News Tribune. The Attorney General's office advised WSP that anything beyond a short news release or Tweet from an agency involved in a use of deadly force "could be problematic," Loftis said.

Trooper Rick Johnson, a WSP public information officer for King County incidents, confirmed in a Tweet last week that a shooting involving troopers occurred in Federal Way and referred further inquiries to outside investigators.

The WSP public information officer for Pierce and Thurston counties, Trooper Robert Reyer did not answer questions from The News Tribune about the public communication process for the in-custody death in Tacoma on Aug. 9.

Reyer, who has released initial statements about shootings involving troopers before, referred all inquiries about the Aug. 9 case to PCFIT, citing the active investigation.

Loftis said WSP did not communicate with PCFIT about the Aug. 9 in-custody death in Tacoma.

"WSP is very leery of putting an investigation at risk by doing something that might challenge the veracity of effort but also leery about being the author of a statement that seems less than authentic, transparent, or informative due to legal restraints," Loftis wrote in a statement. "So it's a balance in each situation."

	<p>Lawler, the Lakewood lieutenant, was assigned as the PCFIT public information officer for the Aug. 9 incident. He released a required weekly update to local media on Wednesday with no new information, including the identities of the troopers involved.</p> <p>In the same email, he sent an update for the week prior that was not previously provided to The News Tribune or posted on the PCFIT website. Loftis said the state's Criminal Justice Training Commission, which provides training for basic law enforcement academy and sets standards for independent deadly force investigations, is convening a group to provide a clearer interpretation of public communication guidelines.</p> <p>"In the meantime, WSP will continue with our original interpretation that we should allow the independent investigating agency to handle all public communications," Loftis wrote.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/13 Seattle teacher strike suspended
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/education-lab/seattle-educators-vote-to-suspend-strike/
GIST	<p>Seattle Public Schools educators voted Tuesday to suspend their five-day strike, pending a ratification of a full contract between the district and union.</p> <p>A suspension means that educators will return to work Wednesday, and school will begin for all students.</p> <p>The vote follows an announcement late Monday night that the union and district had reached a tentative agreement. Union members still need to vote on the agreement, likely later this week. If members reject the full agreement, the strike could start up again.</p> <p>According to a tweet from the union, 78% of members voted and 57% of those members approved the motion to suspend the strike.</p> <p>The vote came after a nearly eight-hour Zoom call with numerous tense exchanges between union leadership and general membership. The union's bargaining team shared the highlights of the proposed contract, and allowed members to ask questions and state their support or opposition. At one point, more than 4,500 of the union's 6,000 members were on the call, with many reporting they faced technical issues.</p> <p>A member of the union allowed a Seattle Times reporter to listen in to the audio of the Zoom conversation, and at several points during the call, a clearly frustrated union president Jennifer Matter sparred with members over the union's bylaws and procedures for voting and debating, calling several members out of order and muting mics.</p> <p>"I did not sign up to be spoken to the way you have spoken to membership today," one educator remarked. Matter apologized, adding she came from a place of love and appreciation, but heated exchanges with members continued.</p> <p>"I am losing my cool, everybody," she said a few minutes later. "We can't keep asking the same question over and over again," referring to several requests to clarify the vote margins required to suspend the strike.</p> <p>"Then you need to explain it better," another educator responded.</p> <p>Members who spoke on the call seemed split; a faction supported a suspension of the strike, while another sizable group of educators complained they didn't have sufficient time to review a summary of the tentative agreement, which union leadership shared close to midnight Monday.</p> <p>Pointed questions from members continued after the union opened voting at around 3 p.m. Union leaders kept the call open until the poll closed at 4:30 p.m.</p>

A full membership vote to suspend a strike is a departure from 2015, the last time the union struck. In that instance, the union’s leaders and a representative assembly of the membership voted to suspend their work stoppage.

A copy of the full contract was not immediately available, and typically isn’t made public until ratified by union members. The contract also must be approved by the school board.

But a summary showed Seattle educators and the district agreed to pay raises of 7% for both certificated and classified staff. Originally, the district proposed a 6.5% increase, which included a state-funded 5.5% inflationary adjustment.

In the second year of the contract, members would receive a 4% salary increase for inflation and 3% the following year. If the state funds a higher inflationary adjustment, union members will receive whichever is greater, the tentative agreement says.

Classified staff — employees who don’t need an education certificate — will also receive a one-time bonus in December of \$1,500. That category includes educational assistants and office staff.

Under the new contract, if approved, classified substitutes would have some of the same benefits as certificated substitutes — accruing sick days and bereavement leave after being on assignment for 20 days, having senior sub status, and receiving enhancements to professional development.

Another contentious point in bargaining was whether to use teacher-to-student ratios in the special education and multilingual programs. Educators wanted to keep ratios and the district wanted to have a workload calculator model instead.

According to the contract summary, most teacher-to-student ratios for students with individualized education programs (IEPs) stayed the same. Some instructional aids were added to classrooms to support students with IEPs. If approved, the district’s Special Education Taskforce will create a workload calculator to be used by the 2023-24 school year at a select number of schools.

Specifics of the workload calculator weren’t available in the summary, which said staffing ratios will be maintained at the schools using the tool and “further use of the workload calculator will have to be bargained.”

Staffing and student ratios in the multilingual program would also remain the same, according to the summary. Added incentives for teachers to receive English language and dual language endorsements would be included in the contract if approved. There would also be retention bonuses for educators who already have those endorsements.

The new contract would add workload protections for teachers, school counselors, nurses, and social workers.

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HEADLINE	09/13 Seattle gives \$780,000 to private club
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/seattle-gives-780k-to-private-club-once-led-by-mayor-bruce-harrell/
GIST	<p>The city of Seattle is giving more than \$780,000 to a private club previously led by Mayor Bruce Harrell, part of a bundle of equitable development grants intended to support diverse property ownership.</p> <p>The city is giving the Royal Esquire Club, a Black men’s social club in Columbia City, \$781,827 “to support the rehabilitation of existing cultural space,” Harrell announced Monday.</p>

It's the fourth largest of 19 awards given to community groups in neighborhoods at high risk of displacement. The larger awards are intended for property acquisition or major projects, while smaller awards are intended to help groups build capacity.

Harrell, on Monday, was still named as the [chair of the Royal Esquire Club's executive committee](#), in a list on the club's website dated to 2019. Last year while running for mayor, he [described himself](#) as chair of the group's board.

Jamie Housen, a Harrell spokesperson, said Harrell resigned from the club in November 2021.

In announcing the awards, the city's Office of Planning and Community Development said an advisory board of community members gave the city recommendations on who should receive funding.

[A city timeline](#), prepared for groups considering applying for funding, said "mayor approval" of awards was to come in August.

But on Monday, Housen said Harrell "had no role in deciding which organizations would receive the awards, and did not receive or score the applications."

He said there was no concern about a conflict of interest and that the advisory board's recommendations were approved "as a slate" by Deputy Mayor Tiffany Washington.

The mayor did release a statement announcing the recipients, which in part said, "With these investments, we are partners in helping these cultural organizations achieve their dreams of owning property and having a forever home in our city."

The city's Equitable Development Initiative was launched in 2016 in response to gentrification and inequitable growth. Funded by a tax on short-term rentals like Airbnb, it has historically provided about \$5 million each year to groups that serve communities at risk of displacement. Additional funding this year came from the city's JumpStart payroll tax on large employers.

Other projects funded by the program this year include Tubman Health, a new health clinic planned for Rainier Valley; a new office for Muslim Housing Services; and improvements to the Daybreak Star Indian Cultural Center in Discovery Park.

The Royal Esquire Club has been a fixture in Seattle's Black community for decades. It was founded in 1947 by five Black men seeking a place to socialize in a segregated city. In its early years, it was repeatedly raided by police and denied a liquor license, until fed up members caravanned to Olympia in the early 1960s, demonstrating on the steps of the Capitol until they got an audience with the governor.

The club moved at least three times over the years before arriving at its current location, an old Columbia City pool hall, in 1985. It hosts events — happy hours, Monday Night Football watch parties, dance classes — most nights of the week. [The most popular is its monthly First Friday Networking Social](#).

Attendance had dipped in recent years, as Seattle's Black population has declined and the club struggled to attract younger members.

But Harrell, who joined the club's leadership in 2016, has been credited with bringing new ideas and a fresh recruiting push that have helped swell membership ranks.

The announcement Monday did not say what specifically the club will use the funding for and the club did not respond to questions.

Harrell has [previously intermingled his official city position with his membership in the Royal Esquire Club](#). In 2018, while City Council president, Harrell involved himself in a wage-theft investigation into the club by the Seattle Office of Labor Standards.

	<p>A club employee had complained she hadn't been paid for some after-hours work. Harrell called the Office of Labor Standards, criticized aspects of the investigation and mentioned his role in the office's budget, the lead investigator wrote in a memo at the time.</p> <p>One Office of Labor Standards manager said she perceived "a level of intimidation and implied threat" and the office's director at the time called Harrell's budget remarks "totally inappropriate."</p> <p>The club agreed to pay about \$11,000 in back wages, interest and penalties and Harrell later defended his actions, saying he was sticking up for a nonprofit in his district.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/13 Monkeypox cases drop; trajectory unclear
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/monkeypox-cases-declining-in-wa-but-outbreak-trajectory-still-unclear/
GIST	<p>After weeks of surging cases, monkeypox is on the decline in Washington state though vaccination levels in King County, the state's primary hot spot, are still well below the level estimated to adequately combat the virus.</p> <p>The drop in infections statewide is directly linked to the drop in cases in King County. Since a peak in late July, the weekly case rate in King County fell 66% to 22 cases in the week of Aug. 28. Early counts for the week of Sept. 4 show 10 cases have been detected so far.</p> <p>King County Health Officer Dr. Jeff Duchin says the decline in cases is likely due to a combination of factors including behavioral change and the vaccination of high-risk communities.</p> <p>The health department also said more people may have some immunity from infection as more susceptible people have been exposed to the virus.</p> <p>Health officials are hesitant to claim the outbreak is under control.</p> <p>"It can be a painful and difficult illness, so ideally, we wouldn't want to see any cases of the illness. But it will take some time to see what type of trajectory the outbreak takes," said spokesperson Sharon Bogan.</p> <p>Vaccine distribution</p> <p>So far, 10,444 residents across Washington have received at least one shot of the Jynneos vaccine as of Sept. 7, according to state health department data. About 6% of these people got a second dose after 28 days. The Jynneos vaccine is a two-dose vaccine series, with two doses administered four weeks apart.</p> <p>In King County alone, over 9,800 residents have received at least one dose of the vaccine — about a quarter of the 40,000 King County residents the county health department estimates are either at the "highest" or at an "elevated" risk for exposure.</p> <p>The health department estimates 80,000 doses are needed to adequately address the outbreak.</p> <p>Monkeypox can affect anyone — regardless of gender or sexual orientation — who has close contact with an infected person. So far, the virus has disproportionately affected the LGBTQ+ community, particularly men who report intimate contact with other men.</p> <p>Many of these King County cases have been identified in the Hispanic community, with the majority between the ages 18 to 49.</p> <p>Distribution inequities</p> <p>Within King County, more than half of all cases were reported in Central Seattle. So far, the county's vaccination drives have been concentrated in this region.</p>

Community workers say current vaccination efforts are inequitable and don't address the socio-economic and geographical barriers people of color, especially queer people of color, may face in accessing the vaccine.

"The most affected and vulnerable group, which is LGBTQ+ people of color, mostly congregates and resides in South King County," said Sasha Samuelu, a community care program coordinator at UTOPIA, a community organization focused on helping trans people of color.

So far, UTOPIA has organized two monkeypox vaccination events in Kent, giving 100 people their first doses.

Agencies should provide vaccine clinics in areas like Kent, Auburn and Federal Way, where the most vulnerable populations live, Samuelu said.

"I'm really appalled that both health agencies and folks are quick to say this is a disease that is affecting gay people but when it comes to vaccine distribution, they find it difficult to prioritize vaccine distribution among these same vulnerable groups," said Diana Krishna, wellness navigator at UTOPIA.

Public Health – Seattle & King County said it has facilitated partnerships between health care organizations and community-based organizations, including UTOPIA and HealthPoint, to host vaccination events. Some of these were focused outreach events and were not broadly publicized.

Since the outbreak, the health department said it has worked closely with organizations on messaging, resources and vaccine distribution coordination.

Bogan said it's important to have a range of approaches to reach communities, because first-come, first-served strategies may not always reach those at higher risk. Some people, she added, may be more likely to get a vaccine at a clinic they have already been to, while others may be interested in a community-based health care site, where their family and others can get vaccinated at the same time.

A look at vaccine distribution at the state level shows 81 doses were given to Thurston County residents, though no monkeypox cases have been recorded there.

In fact, Thurston County has administered more doses than Snohomish County, which has become a virus hot spot. There are six other counties recording monkeypox cases where fewer than 10 doses have been administered so far.

Chris Porter, an LGBTQ+ activist in Seattle, said a "pandemic-epidemic" is weighing on the queer community, especially men of color. Be it the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the COVID-19 pandemic or now monkeypox, queer men of color continue to be disproportionately affected, he said.

"As Black gay men, how do you navigate all of that?"

Enduring stigma

DOH recently expanded its vaccine eligibility requirements to include gay, bisexual and other men who have had sex with men with multiple sexual partners in the last three months. Previously it specified only those with more than 10 sexual partners or those who had group sex in bath houses.

The expanded criteria now also includes sex workers and people who experienced homelessness, unstable housing or were incarcerated in the last three months.

Community organizers in the LGBTQ+ community criticized health officials' past communications about the disease. They say the language, especially the vaccine eligibility questionnaire's focus on number of sexual partners, felt invasive and contributed to the stigma that has already deterred many from getting the vaccine.

	<p>The messaging should have emphasized the fact that the virus spreads through skin-to-skin contact, said Krishna.</p> <p>“So much emphasis has been on the sexual part,” she said. “It causes people to isolate themselves from accessing these resources or vaccines, and leaves them further marginalized.”</p> <p>She added that after this was pointed out, the county health department worked quickly to improve the language.</p> <p>But Porter said messaging, alone, is not enough.</p> <p>“It’s one thing if you’re coming to me and you’re providing this information,” Porter said. “And then my question is, ‘Where can I get the vaccine’ and then you tell me, ‘Well, it’s only available in certain situations and in certain locations, but not necessarily where you live.’</p> <p>“You have to wonder what is the weight and wealth of that information?”</p>
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HEADLINE	09/13 WA among worst for surge in traffic deaths
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/data/wa-among-worst-states-for-surge-in-traffic-deaths/
GIST	<p>Washington’s roads have gotten deadlier since the start of the pandemic — and that’s also been the case across most of the U.S. But in Washington, traffic fatalities have continued to surge in 2022, even as the numbers have started to flatten or decline in other states.</p> <p>There were 327 deaths on Washington roads in the first half of 2022, up from 249 for the same period in 2021, according to a new study on traffic fatalities. That’s 78 additional deaths, or a 31% increase — the sixth-highest jump among states. These numbers include all traffic fatalities — drivers, passengers, pedestrians, cyclists and so on — but a breakdown isn’t available because the data is preliminary.</p> <p>That increase goes against the national trend. The number of U.S. traffic fatalities dropped by about 1% for the first half of 2022.</p> <p>The study comes from Seattle-based QuoteWizard, an online insurance policy comparison tool, and is based on data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and National Safety Council.</p> <p>The number of traffic fatalities in the U.S. started to climb as the pandemic took hold. In fact, the 42,000 deaths on American roads in 2020 was a 13-year high. In Washington, there were 546 traffic fatalities in 2020, up from 516 in 2019 — a fairly modest 5% increase.</p> <p>It might seem counterintuitive that traffic fatalities went up in 2020 since there were far fewer people driving during the lockdowns. But those wide open roads encouraged some risky behaviors, said Nick VinZant, a senior research analyst at QuoteWizard.</p> <p>“What we saw nationwide, beginning in 2020, was this spike in fatalities,” VinZant said.</p> <p>Data shows the spike overwhelmingly involved younger drivers going too fast on uncongested roads, he said. Nationally, the number of speeding-related deaths increased by 11% in 2020, even as the total number of miles driven decreased.</p> <p>VinZant said the expectation was that the spike in fatalities during 2020 would just be a blip, and that the numbers would quickly start to decline in 2021 as traffic volume began to pick up again. But that didn’t happen.</p>

“We really thought [it] would then revert to the trend we’ve [been] seeing since the 1970s where traffic fatalities were declining,” he said. “But then we saw the 2021 fatality numbers, and they were up again, and that was a huge surprise.”

Washington ranked among the 10 states with the biggest jumps in traffic fatalities last year, climbing from 546 in 2020 to 643 in 2021 — an 18% increase. That’s double the national rate of increase of 9%, as fatalities in the U.S. rose from 42,000 in 2020 to 46,000 in 2021. Only eight states experienced a traffic decrease in fatalities last year.

So why did fatalities continue to climb in 2021?

VinZant says that our driving hasn’t gotten better, even as the roads became more crowded.

“Those driving habits that we established during the height of the pandemic when we were driving on those open roads have not shifted back to the way that we were driving in 2019 and before,” he said.

But the data for the first half of 2022, which shows traffic fatalities are leveling off nationwide, suggests driving behaviors are finally changing in response to the increasingly crowded roads.

So why isn’t this happening in Washington, where fatalities are up 31% for the first half of 2022?

It’s difficult to say with certainty — as with any short-term trend, it could simply be a fluke. But VinZant thinks it may have to do with Washington taking longer to return to pre-pandemic norms than other states.

“I think that Washington’s response has been delayed, because Washington — and especially the Seattle area — has not gone back to work, and the traffic didn’t pick up the way it did in other states,” he said.

Traffic volumes in this area are only now starting to return to pre-pandemic levels, VinZant said, but he thinks a lot of us are still holding on to those bad driving habits from when there were fewer people on the road.

The study also shows that nationwide, urban roads have had a bigger increase in traffic fatalities than rural ones so far in 2022 — and in particular, smaller urban “collector” roads that typically connect arterials with local streets.

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HEADLINE	09/13 Some Seattle Amtrak trips canceled
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/some-seattle-amtrak-trips-canceled-as-railroad-workers-strike-looms/
GIST	<p>Amtrak’s Seattle-Chicago and Seattle-California trips were among those canceled in preparation for a threatened Friday strike by railroad workers.</p> <p>With the Empire Builder line and Coast Starlight lines already among the handful of long-distance routes sidetracked, Amtrak may ramp up cancellations if the railroads and the freight rail workers unions fail to reach an agreement by 9 p.m. Thursday.</p> <p>Amtrak has already canceled several of its long-distance trains because there wouldn’t be enough time for them to reach their destinations before a strike or lockout would be allowed to begin. In addition to the Empire Builder and Coast Starlight, Amtrak trips previously scheduled for Wednesday on the California Zephyr, City of New Orleans and Texas Eagle lines have been canceled.</p> <p>Amtrak’s popular Cascades line, which runs through Seattle on the Vancouver-Eugene, Oregon, rail corridor, will be shut down if a work stoppage takes place.</p>

Thursday Cascades passengers may be switched to buses if necessary, said Janet Matkin, communications manager with the Washington State Department of Transportation. Amtrak operates in Washington in partnership with the state agency.

“However, if a strike occurs, it will result in complete service disruptions starting on Friday and there are no buses available this weekend to provide alternative transportation options,” she continued. Ticketed passengers may change their travel date at no extra cost or receive a full refund.

Most Amtrak trains run on tracks owned by freight railroads, and cannot operate if the tracks are shutdown due to a work stoppage. The train tracks on which Amtrak Cascades trains run in Washington are primarily owned by BNSF Railway.

“BNSF controls all train movements in this area and therefore the potential strike will affect Amtrak Cascades trains because they cannot operate without dispatchers,” Matkin said.

Amtrak has pledged any cancellations will come at least 24 hours ahead of expected departures.

Railroads have already started to curtail shipments of hazardous materials and have announced plans to stop hauling refrigerated products ahead of Friday’s strike deadline. Now businesses that rely on Norfolk Southern, Union Pacific, BNSF, CSX, Kansas City Southern and other railroads to deliver their raw materials and finished products have started planning for the worst.

Meanwhile, Biden administration officials are scrambling to develop a plan to use trucks, ships and planes to try to keep the most crucial chemicals and other goods moving if the railroads stop rolling. But the White House is also keeping the pressure on the two sides to settle their differences, and a growing number of business groups are lobbying Congress to be prepared to intervene and block a strike if they can’t reach an agreement.

The railroads have reached tentative agreements with most of their unions, including a ninth deal announced Tuesday, based on the recommendations of a Presidential Emergency Board Joe Biden appointed this summer that called for 24% raises and \$5,000 in bonuses in a five-year deal that’s retroactive to 2020. The deal also includes one additional paid leave day a year and higher health insurance costs.

But all 12 railroad unions must agree to prevent a strike. The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen union that represents engineers, and the transportation division of the International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers union that represents conductors want the railroads to address some of their concerns about unpredictable work schedules and strict attendance rules in addition to agreeing to the recommended wage increases.

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HEADLINE	09/14 New clashes Armenia, Azerbaijan fighting
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/fresh-clashes-armenia-azerbaijan-deadly-fighting-rcna47630
GIST	<p>TBILISI, Georgia — Fresh clashes erupted between Azerbaijan and Armenia on Wednesday as international efforts intensified to end violence that killed nearly 100 soldiers in the deadliest fighting between the former Soviet republics since 2020.</p> <p>The Armenian defense ministry accused Azerbaijan, which is backed politically and militarily by Turkey, of firing artillery, mortar and small arms in a fresh attack.</p> <p>“The situation on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border remained tense,” the defense ministry said.</p> <p>At least 49 Armenian and 50 Azerbaijani military were killed on Tuesday in clashes along the countries’ border, prompting an appeal for calm from Russian President Vladimir Putin. Both sides blamed each other for the fighting.</p>

The clashes have raised fears of another major armed conflict in the former Soviet Union while Russia's military is tied up with the [invasion of Ukraine](#).

A full-fledged conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan would risk dragging in Russia and Turkey, and destabilize an important corridor for pipelines carrying oil and gas just as confrontation over Ukraine disrupts energy supplies.

Azerbaijan accused Armenia, which is in a military alliance with Moscow and home to a Russian military base, of firing mortars and artillery against its military units. It said that two civilians had been injured since the clashes erupted.

"Our positions are periodically being fired against at the moment," Azerbaijan's defense ministry said. "Our units are taking the necessary response measures."

On Tuesday, Armenia said its neighbor struck well inside its territory, including Jermuk, a resort town known for its hot springs.

Reuters was unable to immediately verify battlefield accounts from either side.

The flare-up in violence has raised international concern, with Russia, United States, France and the European Union calling for restraint and stepping up diplomatic efforts to end the fighting.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Tuesday said Russia could either "stir the pot" or use its influence in the region to help "calm the waters." He held separate calls with Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Alyiev to urge them to end military action.

EU Special Representative Toivo Klaar was set to arrive in the south Caucasus on Wednesday to facilitate dialogue between the two countries.

The Moscow-led Collective Security Treaty Organization, to which Armenia had appealed after the clashes erupted, dispatched a delegation to assess the situation on the border.

Armenia and Azerbaijan have been fighting for decades over [Nagorno-Karabakh](#), a mountainous enclave internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan but that until 2020 was populated and fully controlled by ethnic Armenians.

Azerbaijan won significant territorial gains in and around Nagorno-Karabakh in a six-week war that year. Skirmishes have erupted periodically despite a Russian-brokered ceasefire.

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HEADLINE	09/13 Airline crew shortages threaten fall travel
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/air-travel-crew-fall-winter-travel/
GIST	<p>Shortages of pilots, flight attendants and gate agents threaten to unravel fall and winter travel plans in the U.S., after a turbulent summer, airline unions say. There's been a surge in fliers, according to the aviation industry, since COVID-19 concerns continue to subside.</p> <p>The unions spoke at a CBS News travel summit in Washington Tuesday.</p> <p>Dennis Tajer, an American Airlines pilot and spokesman for the Allied Pilots Association, says recruitment failures and pandemic-era furloughs have hamstrung airlines.</p> <p>"Airlines — including American Airlines — are still suffering from this mismanagement," Tajer said. "There is so much uncertainty in the fall and winter schedule, that we cannot be silent."</p>

This month, pilots picketed at airports across the country, threatening to strike if airlines don't approve better contracts for them and fix operational issues that have led to delays and cancellations.

Flight attendants say they are also stretched too thin.

"Staffing is at its lowest level across the board," says Sara Nelson, president of the Association of Flight Attendants.

JetBlue is among the airlines that faced backlash earlier this year after cancelling hundreds of flights because of staffing shortages.

JetBlue CEO Robin Hayes also blamed a different factor — restrictions that have arisen due to Florida rocket launches in crowded nearby airspace.

"We created this kind of dynamic where the system couldn't handle the number of flights," Hayes says.

JetBlue has also trimmed routes into 2023 to "ensure operational reliability," as it pursues a merger with low-cost airline Spirit.

But Airlines for America head Nick Calio blames more "inexperienced travelers" for some disruptions, while saying the industry remains resilient.

"People want to go places, they're getting to places," Calio says.

On Labor Day weekend, the TSA says it screened nearly 8.8 million passengers, surpassing pre-pandemic 2019 levels as demand continues to rise.

In August, the Transportation Department said summer data showed complaints were up 270% above pre-pandemic levels.

Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg, in a letter to airlines, called on them to improve their customer service plans as the Biden administration pushes an online "dashboard" to help fliers navigate airline policies for travel disruptions.

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HEADLINE	09/13 WHO: 17M in EU suffered from long Covid
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/report-17-million-eu-suffered-long-covid-19-89813202
GIST	<p>JERUSALEM -- New research suggests at least 17 million people in the European Union may have experienced long COVID-19 symptoms during the first two years of the coronavirus pandemic, with women more likely than men to suffer from the condition, the World Health Organization said Tuesday.</p> <p>The research, conducted for the WHO/Europe, was unclear on whether the symptoms that linger, recur or first appear at least one month after a coronavirus infection were more common in vaccinated or unvaccinated people. At least 17 million people met the WHO's criteria of long COVID-19 — with symptoms lasting at least three months in 2020 and 2021, the report said.</p> <p>“Millions of people in our region, straddling Europe and Central Asia, are suffering debilitating symptoms many months after their initial COVID-19 infection,” said Hans Henri P. Kluge, WHO Regional Director for Europe, during a conference in Tel Aviv.</p> <p>The modeling also suggests that women are twice as likely as men to experience long COVID-19, and the risk increases dramatically among severe infections needing hospitalization, the report said. One-in-three women and one-in-five men are likely to develop long COVID-19, according to the report.</p>

	<p>“Knowing how many people are affected and for how long is important for health systems and government agencies to develop rehabilitative and support services,” said Christopher Murray, director of the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, which conducted the research for the WHO.</p> <p>The research, which represents estimates and not actual numbers of affected people, tracks with some other recent studies on the constellation of longer-term symptoms after coronavirus infections.</p> <p>A U.S. study of veterans published in Nature Medicine in May provided fresh evidence that long COVID-19 can happen even after breakthrough infections in vaccinated people, and that older adults face higher risks for the long-term effects. The study showed that about one-third who had breakthrough infections exhibited signs of long COVID.</p> <p>A separate report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that up to a year after an initial coronavirus infection, 1 in 4 adults aged 65 and older had at least one potential long COVID-19 health problem, compared with 1 in 5 younger adults.</p> <p>Most people who have COVID-19 fully recover. But the WHO in Europe report on Tuesday estimated that 10% to 20% develop mid- and long-term symptoms such as fatigue, breathlessness and cognitive dysfunction.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/14 Still no monkeypox vaccines Africa nations
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/monkeypox-drops-west-vaccines-africa-89872096
GIST	<p>ABUJA, Nigeria -- With monkeypox cases subsiding in Europe and parts of North America, many scientists say now is the time to prioritize stopping the virus in Africa.</p> <p>In July, the U.N. health agency designated monkeypox as a global emergency and appealed to the world to support African countries so that the catastrophic vaccine inequity that plagued the outbreak of COVID-19 wouldn't be repeated.</p> <p>But the global spike of attention has had little impact on the continent. No rich countries have shared vaccines or treatments with Africa, and some experts fear interest may soon evaporate.</p> <p>“Nothing has changed for us here, the focus is all on monkeypox in the West,” said Placide Mbala, a virologist who directs the global health research department at Congo’s Institute of Biomedical Research.</p> <p>“The countries in Africa where monkeypox is endemic are still in the same situation we have always been, with weak resources for surveillance, diagnostics and even the care of patients,” he said.</p> <p>Monkeypox has sickened people in parts of West and Central Africa since the 1970s, but it wasn't until the disease triggered unusual outbreaks in Europe and North America that public health officials even thought to use vaccines. As rich countries rushed to buy nearly all the world's supply of the most advanced shot against monkeypox, the World Health Organization said in June that it would create a vaccine-sharing mechanism to help needy countries get doses.</p> <p>So far, that hasn’t happened.</p> <p>“Africa is still not benefiting from either monkeypox vaccines or the antiviral treatments,” said Dr. Matshidiso Moeti, WHO’s Africa director, adding that only small amounts have been available for research purposes. Since 2000, Africa has reported about 1,000 to 2,000 suspected monkeypox cases every year. So far this year, the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have identified about 3,000 suspected infections, including more than 100 deaths.</p> <p>In recent weeks, monkeypox cases globally have fallen by more than a quarter, including by 55% in Europe, according to WHO.</p>

Dr. Ifedayo Adetifa, head of the Nigeria Center for Disease Control, said the lack of help for Africa was reminiscent of the inequity seen during COVID-19.

“Everybody looked after their (own) problem and left everybody else,” he said. Adetifa lamented that monkeypox outbreaks in Africa never got the international attention that might have prevented the virus from spreading globally.

Rich countries have stretched their vaccine supplies by using a fifth of the regular dose, but none have expressed interest in helping Africa. WHO's regional office for the Americas recently announced it had struck a deal to obtain 100,000 monkeypox doses that will start being delivered to countries in Latin America and the Caribbean within weeks. But no similar agreements have been reached for Africa.

“I would very much like to have vaccines to offer to my patients or anything that could just reduce their stay in the hospital,” said Dr. Dimie Ogoina, a professor of medicine at Nigeria’s Delta University and a member of WHO’s monkeypox emergency committee.

Since WHO declared monkeypox a global emergency, Nigeria has seen the disease continue to spread, with few significant interventions.

“We still do not have the funds to do all the studies that we need,” Ogoina said.

Research into the animals that carry monkeypox and spread it to humans in Africa is piecemeal and lacks coordination, said Mbala, of Congo’s Institute of Biomedical Research.

Last week, the White House said it was optimistic about a recent drop in monkeypox cases in the U.S., saying authorities had administered more than 460,000 doses of the vaccine made by Bavarian Nordic.

The U.S. has about 35% of the world’s more than 56,000 monkeypox cases, but nearly 80% of the world’s supply of the vaccine, according to a recent analysis by the advocacy group Public Citizen.

The U.S. hasn't announced any monkeypox vaccine donations for Africa, but the White House did make a recent request to Congress for \$600 million in global aid.

Even if rich countries start sharing monkeypox tools with Africa soon, they shouldn't be applauded, other experts said.

“It should not be the case that countries only decide to share leftover vaccines when the epidemic is declining in their countries,” said Piero Olliaro, a professor of infectious diseases of poverty at Oxford University. “It is exactly the same scenario as COVID and it is still completely unethical.”

Olliaro, who recently returned to the U.K. from a trip to Central African Republic to work on monkeypox, said WHO's emergency declaration appeared to offer “no tangible benefits in Africa.”

In Nigeria’s Lagos state, which includes the country's largest city and is hard hit by monkeypox, some people are calling for the government to urgently do more.

“You can’t tell me that the situation wouldn’t have improved without a vaccine,” said Temitayo Lawal, 29, an economist.

“If there is no need for vaccines, why are we now seeing the U.S. and all these countries using them?” he asked. “Our government needs to acquire doses as well.”

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SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/taiwan-growing-destination-hong-kong-residents-freedom/story?id=89817220
GIST	<p>As the Chinese government increased its crackdown on political speech and dissenters in Hong Kong in recent years, tens of thousands of longtime residents have fled to nearby Taiwan to escape the oppression.</p> <p>For many ex-pats, like Annie Zhang, a former editor of a Hong Kong-based media company, their new surroundings have allowed them to express themselves without any fear of jail time or other forms of severe repercussions.</p> <p>"Many of my friends are cultural producers, or maybe they are booksellers. They are writers. They are artists, but they cannot create things freely in Hong Kong now. So that's why they chose to leave," Zhang told ABC News.</p> <p>Even as tension has risen between Taiwan and its allies and China, some of those in exile say they are determined to speak out and push back against the aggression.</p> <p>More than 121,000 Hong Kong residents have left the territory in the last year, according to data from Hong Kong's Census and Statistics Department.</p> <p>Since 2019, Taiwan has welcomed more than 37,000 Hong Kong residents, according to data from the Taiwanese government.</p> <p>Two years ago, the Chinese government imposed new national security law on Hong Kong that outlawed "secession, subversion of state power, terrorism and foreign collusion" in intervening in Hong Kong's affairs. The law was enacted following protests in 2019 and 2020 against the government over its attempt to change its extradition policy.</p> <p>Hundreds of Hong Kong residents were arrested and targeted in violations of the law for speaking out against the government.</p> <p>Kacey Wong was a visual artist based in Hong Kong and put out videos that protested the Chinese government's policies. In one video, he dressed up as Moses and delivered demands to the government.</p> <p>Wong said he fled to Taiwan after an article in a state-owned newspaper in Hong Kong highlighted his work and protests.</p> <p>"I think they don't like to be laughed at. And I think my gripe is I kind of make fun of them. That's my crime," Wong told ABC News.</p> <p>Many Hong Kong ex-pats have continued to publicly express defiance of the Chinese laws since they relocated to Taiwan.</p> <p>And now many of those ex-pats are witnessing their former country's government flex its military muscle against their new haven.</p> <p>Soon after House Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited Taiwan and met with its leaders on Aug. 2, the Chinese government stepped up its military presence around the waters between the two nations. Pelosi was the highest-ranking U.S. official to visit Taiwan in 25 years.</p> <p>In addition to military drills involving jets and ships, the Chinese military also launched missiles that flew over the island.</p> <p>In reaction to the growing military moves, many Taiwanese residents are training to fight back in case of an attack by the Chinese government.</p>

	<p>Robert Tsao, a retired businessman who founded the United Microelectronics Corporation, told ABC News he donated \$100 million U.S. to support training Taiwan's military and civilians.</p> <p>Tsao said he was spurred to make the donations following Pelosi's visit and the Chinese government's military drills.</p> <p>"I will fight to die. I won't live to see Taiwan become another Hong Kong," he told ABC News. "I will not [be] going to allow that happen. They have to over my dead body to do that."</p> <p>But as the hostility between the Chinese government and Taiwan wages on, some of the Hong Kong residents who have settled on the island said they have deeper fears.</p> <p>Wong told ABC News that he is preparing for the possibility that he may have to relocate again.</p> <p>"From my perspective, I think Hong Kong is the first step. So it's fallen as a city and Taiwan is next," he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/13 Ukraine troops push fleeing Russians
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/ukraine-piles-pressure-retreating-russian-troops-89799453
GIST	<p>KHARKIV, Ukraine -- Ukrainian troops piled pressure on retreating Russian forces Tuesday, pressing deeper into occupied territory and sending more Kremlin troops fleeing ahead of the counteroffensive that has inflicted a stunning blow on Moscow's military prestige.</p> <p>As the advance continued, Ukraine's border guard services said the army took control of Vovchansk — a town just 3 kilometers (2 miles) from Russia seized on the first day of the war. Russia has acknowledged that it recently withdrew troops from areas in the northeastern region of Kharkiv.</p> <p>Russian troops were also pulling out from Melitopol, the second largest city in Ukraine's southern Zaporizhzhia region, the city's pre-occupation mayor said. His claim could not immediately be verified.</p> <p>Melitopol has been occupied since early March. Capturing it would give Kyiv an opportunity to disrupt Russian supply lines between the south and the eastern Donbas region, the two major areas where Moscow-backed forces hold territory.</p> <p>Melitopol Mayor Ivan Fedorov wrote on Telegram that the Russian troops were heading toward Moscow-annexed Crimea. He said columns of military equipment were reported at a checkpoint in Chonhar, a village marking the boundary between the Crimean peninsula and the Ukrainian mainland.</p> <p>In the newly freed village of Chkalovske in the Kharkiv region, Svitlana Honchar said the Russians' departure was sudden and swift.</p> <p>"They left like the wind," Honchar said Tuesday after loading cans of food aid into her car. "They were fleeing by any means they could."</p> <p>Some Russians appeared to have been left behind in the hasty retreat. "They were trying to catch up," she said.</p> <p>It was not yet clear if the Ukrainian blitz, which unfolded after months of little discernible movement, could signal a turning point in the nearly seven-month war.</p> <p>But the country's officials were buoyant, releasing footage showing their forces burning Russian flags and inspecting abandoned, charred tanks. In one video, border guards tore down a poster that read, "We are one people with Russia."</p>

Momentum has switched back and forth before, and Ukraine's American allies were careful not to declare a premature victory since Russian President Vladimir Putin still has troops and resources to tap.

In the face of Russia's largest defeat since its botched attempt to capture Kyiv early in the war, Defense Ministry spokesman Igor Konashenkov said troops were hitting back with “massive strikes” in all sectors. But there were no immediate reports of a sudden uptick in Russian attacks.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that Ukrainian forces were carrying out “stabilization measures” across recaptured territory in the south and east, and rounding up Russian troops, “saboteurs” and alleged collaborators.

In his nightly address, Zelenskyy also pledged to restore normalcy in the liberated areas.

“It is very important that together with our troops, with our flag, ordinary, normal life enters the de-occupied territory,” he said, citing an example of how people in one village had already begun receiving pension payments after months of occupation.

Reports of chaos abounded as Russian troops pulled out — as well as claims that they were surrendering en masse. The claims could not be confirmed.

Ukrainian Deputy Minister of Defense Hanna Maliar said Kyiv is trying to persuade even more Russian soldiers to give up, launching shells filled with flyers ahead of their advance.

“Russians use you as cannon fodder. Your life doesn’t mean anything for them. You don’t need this war. Surrender to Armed Forces of Ukraine,” the flyers read.

In the wake of the retreat, Ukrainian authorities moved into several areas to investigate alleged atrocities committed by Russian troops against civilians.

Since Saturday, the Kharkiv regional police have repeatedly reported that local law enforcement officers have found civilian bodies bearing signs of torture across territories formerly held by Russia. It was not possible to verify their statements.

On Tuesday, regional police alleged that Russian troops set up “a torture chamber” at the local police station in Balakliya, a town of 25,000, that was occupied from March until last week.

In a Facebook post, the head of the police force’s investigative department, Serhii Bolvinov, cited testimony from Balakliya residents and claimed that Russian troops “always kept at least 40 people captive” on the premises.

Meanwhile, military analysts sought to understand the blow sustained by Moscow.

British intelligence said that one premier force, the 1st Guards Tank Army, had been “severely degraded” during the invasion, along with the conventional Russian forces designed to counter NATO.

“It will likely take years for Russia to rebuild this capability,” the British officials said.

The setback might renew Russia's interest in peace talks, said Abbas Gallyamov, an independent Russian political analyst and former speechwriter for Putin.

But even if Putin were to sit down at the negotiating table, Zelenskyy has made it clear that Russia must return all Ukrainian territory, including Crimea, Gallyamov said.

“This is unacceptable to Moscow, so talks are, strictly speaking, impossible,” he said.

Putin's previous actions "have restricted his room to maneuver," so he "wouldn't be able to put anything meaningful on the table."

For talks to be possible, Putin "would need to leave and be replaced by someone who's relatively untarnished by the current situation," such as his deputy chief of staff, the Moscow mayor or the Russian prime minister, Gallyamov said.

The retreat did not stop Russia from pounding Ukrainian positions. It shelled the city of Lozova in the Kharkiv region, killing three people and injuring nine, said regional Gov. Oleh Syniehubov.

And Ukrainian officials said Russia kept up shelling around Europe's largest nuclear facility, where fighting has raised fears of a nuclear disaster. The Nikopol area, which is across the Dnieper River from the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, was shelled six times during the night, but no injuries were immediately reported, said regional Gov. Valentyn Reznichenko.

Strikes have also continued unabated on the city of Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest and one that has been hammered by artillery for months.

Among Kharkiv's battle-scarred apartment buildings, one man who returned to feed the birds struck a defiant tone, saying that the success of the Ukrainian counteroffensive would likely prompt harsh Russian retaliation against civilian targets. But he said the Kremlin would not succeed in intimidating ordinary Ukrainians.

Putin "will strike so we don't have water, electricity, to create more chaos and intimidate us," said Serhii who only gave his first name. "But he will not succeed because we will survive, and Putin will soon croak!"

The counteroffensive has provoked rare public criticism of Putin's war in Russia. Some of the war's defenders played down the idea that the success belonged to Ukraine, blaming instead Western weapons and fighters for the losses.

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HEADLINE	09/13 Northern Calif. wildfire destroys homes
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/mosquito-fire-northern-california-destroyed-dozens-homes/story?id=89817815
GIST	<p>A fast-moving wildfire scorching through Northern California has destroyed dozens of homes and is creating dangerous smoke conditions in regions farther north.</p> <p>The Mosquito Fire has burned through nearly 49,000 acres and has gutted at least 25 single occupancy residences in El Dorado and Placer counties since it sparked on Sept. 6, according to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.</p> <p>The fire, which is only 16% contained, could worsen as strong southwest winds bring drier air on Tuesday, fire officials said.</p> <p>More than 11,000 people in the region have been ordered to evacuate. Both the El Dorado and Tahoe National Forests are closed because of the Mosquito Fire, officials said.</p> <p>The fire is so intense that the smoke being emitted is producing hazardous air quality conditions for states farther north and east. A red flag warning in Wyoming has been issued due to winds gusting up to 30 mph and humidity levels as low as 10%.</p> <p>Large plumes of smoke were seen covering the city of Reno, Nevada, in a time-lapse video posted to Twitter on Sunday by the National Weather Service's Reno office. The smoke lingered in the Tahoe Basin through at least Monday, according to NWS.</p>

	<p>More than 2,600 firefighters worked overnight Monday to build and strengthen control lines surrounding the largest portion of the blaze, according to Cal Fire.</p> <p>"Firefighters are remaining vigilant on the southern edge of the fire to ensure that there is no threat of escape," a bulletin for the Mosquito Fire stated.</p> <p>Nationwide, more than 6.7 million acres of land have burned this year, with most of the fires concentrated in the Northwest, according to the National Interagency Fire Center. More than 43,000 of those fires were sparked by people, while just 6,341 were sparked by lightning, according to the Fire Center.</p> <p>Bone-dry landscapes as a result of a decadeslong megadrought in the West is exacerbating the fire danger, causing dehydrated vegetation to act as fuel for the flames.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/13 Ransomware hits Buenos Aires legislature
SOURCE	https://therecord.media/buenos-aires-legislature-announces-ransomware-attack/
GIST	<p>The legislature of Argentina's capital city announced a ransomware attack this week, saying that its internal operating systems were compromised and WiFi connectivity was down.</p> <p>In several tweets, the account for the legislature of Buenos Aires said the attack began on Sunday and took down the building's WiFi network, among other systems.</p> <p>"Necessary measures were quickly taken to ensure continuity of work and not to interrupt parliamentary work," they wrote. On Tuesday, they said, they planned to restore the WiFi network and slowly bring other systems back online.</p> <p>"We are working with the areas involved and with specialists in the field to restore normality to all processes as soon as possible," the legislature said.</p> <p>The incident has already been reported to several law enforcement agencies in Argentina.</p> <p>The legislature's website is still down as of Tuesday afternoon EST. The affected government agencies did not respond to requests for comment about the state of the restoration effort.</p> <p>No ransomware group has taken credit for the incident, but several gangs have targeted governments across Central and South America over the past year.</p> <p>Argentina's Judiciary of Córdoba was attacked by a ransomware group last month, while just two weeks ago, Chile's cybersecurity incident response team said an unnamed government agency was dealing with a ransomware attack that targeted the organization's Microsoft tools and VMware ESXi servers.</p> <p>The Dominican Republic, meanwhile, announced that it was refusing to pay a ransom following an attack on one of its departments on August 26.</p> <p>Ransomware groups targeted the Secretary of State for Finance of Rio de Janeiro in April and crippled the government of Costa Rica in May. There have also been several other rumored attacks on South American nations that were never confirmed.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/13 Pro-Ukraine hackers breach Russia TV
SOURCE	https://therecord.media/pro-ukraine-hackers-claim-hack-on-russian-tv-broadcasts/

GIST	<p>Pro-Ukrainian hackers on Sunday took credit for breaching Russian TV channels and broadcasting anti-war messages comparing Russia's attack on Ukraine to the September 11 terrorist attacks in New York.</p> <p>Members of a pro-Ukrainian hacktivist group called "hdr0" said on Telegram that several Russian channels, including Channel One Russia, Russia-24, and Russia-1 were affected by the hack. The group did not provide details about how they carried out the attack or how many people saw the message.</p> <p>However, it would not be the first time hacktivists have targeted Russian TV channels. In May, hackers replaced broadcasts of Vladimir Putin's Victory Day parade in Moscow — commemorating the defeat of Nazi Germany in World War II — with an antiwar message that read: "The blood of thousands of Ukrainians and hundreds of murdered children is on your hands."</p> <p>The hacked broadcast over the weekend showed footage of Russian attacks on Ukrainian cities and excerpts from interviews with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and other world leaders condemning Russia for the violence in Ukraine.</p> <p>"Once the world saw the face of terrorism but did not recognize its real owner," the message said. "The world was looking for it in Afghanistan, Iraq... but the terrorist was initially located in Moscow."</p> <p>"They [Russians] are finally seeing the truth, whether they like it or not."</p> <p>Last week, the group claimed to have hacked into a Russian television station in Crimea to broadcast a public address by Zelensky. They also called on the local population to act in case the Ukrainian military takes control of the region.</p> <p>A similar attack on Russian TV in Crimea took place in August: hackers broadcasted a Zelensky speech, followed by the words: "Crimea is Ukrainian land."</p> <p>Pro-Kremlin hackers are also following a similar playbook. In July, two radio stations owned by one of Ukraine's largest broadcasters were hacked to spread fake messages that Zelensky was hospitalized and in critical condition.</p> <p>In June, hackers attacked the Ukrainian streaming service Oll.tv and replaced the broadcast of a football match between Ukraine and Wales with Russian propaganda. In February, Ukraine's national public broadcaster suffered a distributed denial-of-service attack, according to its general producer Dmytro Khorkin.</p> <p>"Russia has been attacking us all the time since the beginning of the war in Ukraine," he told The Record in an interview following the incident.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/14 OriginLogger RAT: successor to Agent Tesla
SOURCE	https://thehackernews.com/2022/09/researchers-detail-originlogger-rat.html
GIST	<p>Palo Alto Networks Unit 42 has detailed the inner workings of a malware called OriginLogger, which has been touted as a successor to the widely used information stealer and remote access trojan (RAT) known as Agent Tesla.</p> <p>A .NET based keylogger and remote access, Agent Tesla has had a long-standing presence in the threat landscape, allowing malicious actors to gain remote access to targeted systems and beacon sensitive information to an actor-controlled domain.</p> <p>Known to be used in the wild since 2014, it's advertised for sale on dark web forums and is generally distributed through malicious spam emails as an attachment.</p>

In February 2021, cybersecurity firm Sophos [disclosed two new variants](#) of the commodity malware (version 2 and 3) that featured capabilities to steal credentials from web browsers, email apps, and VPN clients, as well as use Telegram API for command-and-control.

Now according to Unit 42 researcher Jeff White, what has been tagged as AgentTesla version 3 is actually [OriginLogger](#), which is said to have sprung up to fill the void left by the former after its operators shut shop on March 4, 2019, following legal troubles.

The cybersecurity firm's starting point for the investigation was a [YouTube video](#) that was posted in November 2018 detailing its features, leading to the discovery of a malware sample ("[OriginLogger.exe](#)") that was uploaded to the VirusTotal malware database on May 17, 2022.

The executable is a builder binary that allows a purchased customer to specify the kinds of data to be captured, including clipboard, screenshots, and the list of applications and services (e.g., browsers, email clients etc.) from which the credentials are to be extracted.

User authentication is achieved by sending a request to an OriginLogger server, which resolves to the domain names 0xfd3[.]com and its newer counterpart originpro[.]me based on two builder artifacts compiled on September 6, 2020, and June 29, 2022.

Unit 42 said it was able to identify a GitHub profile with the username 0xfd3 that hosted two source code repositories for stealing passwords from Google Chrome and Microsoft Outlook, both of which are used in OrionLogger.

OrionLogger, like Agent Tesla, is delivered via a [decoy Microsoft Word document](#) that, when opened, is designed to display an image of a passport for a German citizen and a credit card, along with a number of Excel Worksheets embedded into it.

The worksheets, in turn, contain a VBA macro that uses [MSHTA](#) to invoke an HTML page hosted on a remote server, which, for its part, includes an obfuscated JavaScript code to fetch two encoded binaries hosted on Bitbucket.

The first of the two pieces of malware is a loader that utilizes the technique of [process hollowing](#) to inject the second executable, the OrionLogger payload, into the [aspnet_compiler.exe process](#), a legitimate utility to precompile ASP.NET applications.

"The malware uses tried and true methods and includes the ability to keylog, steal credentials, take screenshots, download additional payloads, upload your data in a myriad of ways and attempt to avoid detection," White said.

What's more, an analysis of a corpus of over 1,900 samples shows that the most common exfiltration mechanisms for sending the data back to the attacker is via SMTP, FTP, web uploads to the OrionLogger panel, and Telegram with the help of 181 unique bots.

"Commercial keyloggers have historically catered to less advanced attackers, but as illustrated in the initial lure document analyzed here, this does not make attackers any less capable of using multiple tools and services to obfuscate and make analysis more complicated," White further said.

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HEADLINE	09/13 FBI: legacy medical devices pose risk
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/analysis/device-security/fbi-legacy-medical-devices-pose-risk-of-exploit-patient-safety-impacts
GIST	Cyber threat actors are increasingly exploiting unpatched medical devices operating on outdated software and those with a lack of adequate security features, according to a new FBI private industry notification.

An increasing number of vulnerabilities have been identified on these vulnerable devices, where an exploit could impact data integrity and confidentiality, in addition to causing disruptions in operational functions and impacting patient safety.

For industry leaders, many of the listed medical device security risks may be familiar: hardware design and software management vulnerabilities, the use of standardized or specialized configurations, missing embedded security features, and the inability to upgrade those features.

Further, some devices leverage customized software that requires special upgrading or patching procedures, which only compounds existing delays with patching in the healthcare environment. There is also the [ecosystem to consider, often complex](#) with a substantial number of devices.

“Medical device hardware often remains active for 10 to 30 years, however, underlying software life cycles are specified by the manufacturer, ranging from a couple months to maximum life expectancy per device allowing cyber threat actors time to discover and exploit vulnerabilities,” the alert reminds healthcare entities

For the FBI, the leading concerns center around legacy devices and the reliance on outdated software due to the lack of support, patches, or updates from manufacturers. As such, many devices are particularly vulnerable to cyberattacks.

Threat actors can easily exploit devices using default configurations and those not initially designed with security in mind. Citing several studies remarking on the prevalence of the targeting of devices, including insulin pumps, the FBI is urging healthcare providers to “actively secure medical devices, identify vulnerabilities, and increase employee awareness reporting.”

For John Riggi, American Hospital Association’s national advisor for cybersecurity and risk, the alert reiterates the need for [Congress to pass the PATCH Act](#), lauded by industry stakeholders as an effort that would ensure medical device manufacturers implement increased cybersecurity requirements for their products to address longstanding reliance on outdated legacy tech.

Device vulnerabilities pose “a significant cyber risk to hospitals. In 2017, the FBI reported that the North Korean WannaCry global healthcare ransomware attack was fueled by vulnerabilities in medical devices,” Riggi said in a statement.

The [PATCH Act would address many of the risks](#) and vulnerabilities outlined in the FBI alert, requiring manufacturers to “monitor and identify post-market vulnerabilities in a timely manner, develop a plan for coordinated vulnerability disclosure, provide lifetime cybersecurity support of the device and provide an accounting of all software contained in the device,” he added.

While awaiting the progress from the proposed bill, healthcare entities should ensure their business associate agreements with medical device and tech vendors have bolstered cybersecurity requirements, explained Riggi. The [Healthcare and Public Health Sector](#) Coordinating Council shared a guide to medical technology [model contract language in March](#).

The FBI recommendations outlined in its industry notice can support provider organizations with the needed policies and security measures to better defend against these common risks. The recommendations are broken down into endpoint protection, asset management, identity and access management, employee training, and vulnerability management.

Healthcare entities are also encouraged to provide the FBI with feedback on the medical device insights.

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HEADLINE	09/13 Microsoft alert: Windows flaw under attack
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/microsoft-raises-alert-under-attack-windows-flaw

Microsoft on Tuesday warned that its security teams have detected zero-day exploitation of a critical vulnerability in its flagship Windows platform.

Redmond included a fix for the latest zero-day in the September batch of Patch Tuesday updates and warned that attackers are already exploiting the flaw to gain SYSTEM privileges on fully patched Windows machines.

Microsoft released a barebones bulletin acknowledging the bug exists in Windows Common Log File System (CLFS), a subsystem used for data and event logging.

From the [bulletin](#):

“An attacker who successfully exploited this vulnerability could gain SYSTEM privileges. An attacker must already have access and the ability to run code on the target system. This technique does not allow for remote code execution in cases where the attacker does not already have that ability on the target system.”

The vulnerability, tracked as [CVE-2022-37969](#), was reported to Microsoft by four different organizations, suggesting it was used in an exploit chain linked to limited, targeted attacks.

Microsoft did not release any technical details on the bug or any indicators of compromise (IOCs) to help defenders hunt for signs of infection.

The already-exploited CLFS flaw carries a CVSS score of 7.8 out of 10.

The Microsoft Patch Tuesday releases cover at least 64 new vulnerabilities in a wide range of Windows and OS components, including remote code execution flaws in Dynamics CRM, SharePoint, Office and Office Components, Windows Defender and the Chromium-based Microsoft Edge.

[According to ZDI](#), The Trend Micro unit that closely tracks vulnerability warnings, Windows admins should pay urgent attention to these additional issues:

[CVE-2022-34718](#) -- Windows TCP/IP Remote Code Execution Vulnerability -- This Critical-rated bug could allow a remote, unauthenticated attacker to execute code with elevated privileges on affected systems without user interaction. That officially puts it into the “wormable” category and earns it a CVSS rating of 9.8. However, only systems with IPv6 enabled and IPsec configured are vulnerable. While good news for some, if you’re using IPv6 (as many are), you’re probably running IPsec as well. Definitely test and deploy this update quickly.

[CVE-2022-34724](#) -- Windows DNS Server Denial of Service Vulnerability -- This bug is only rated Important since there’s no chance of code execution, but you should probably treat it as Critical due to its potential impact. A remote, unauthenticated attacker could create a denial-of-service (DoS) condition on your DNS server. It’s not clear if the DoS just kills the DNS service or the whole system. Shutting down DNS is always bad, but with so many resources in the cloud, a loss of DNS pointing the way to those resources could be catastrophic for many enterprises.

[CVE-2022-3075](#) -- Chromium: CVE-2022-3075 Insufficient data validation in Mojo -- This patch was released by the Google Chrome team back on September 2, so this is more of an “in case you missed it.” This vulnerability allows code execution on affected Chromium-based browsers (like Edge) and has been detected in the wild. This is the sixth Chrome exploit detected in the wild this year. The trend shows the near-ubiquitous browser platform has become a popular target for attackers. Make sure to update all of your systems based on Chromium.

In addition to Microsoft, software maker Adobe also [rolled out security fixes](#) for at least 63 security vulnerabilities in a wide range of widely deployed Windows and macOS software products. As part of the scheduled September batch of Patch Tuesday updates, Adobe called attention to critical-rated bulletins affecting the Adobe Bridge, InDesign, Photoshop, InCopy, Animate and Illustrator software products.

	Adobe said it was not aware of any exploits in the wild for any of the patched vulnerabilities.
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HEADLINE	09/13 China, India agents working for Twitter?
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/whistleblower-china-india-had-agents-working-twitter
GIST	<p>Twitter's former security chief told Congress Tuesday there was "at least one agent" from China's intelligence service on Twitter's payroll and that the company knowingly allowed India to add agents to the company roster as well, potentially giving those nations access to sensitive data about users.</p> <p>These were some of the troubling revelations from Peiter "Mudge" Zatko, a respected cybersecurity expert and Twitter whistleblower who appeared before the Senate Judiciary Committee to lay out his allegations against the company.</p> <p>Zatko told lawmakers that the social media platform is plagued by weak cyber defenses that make it vulnerable to exploitation by "teenagers, thieves and spies" and put the privacy of its users at risk.</p> <p>"I am here today because Twitter leadership is misleading the public, lawmakers, regulators and even its own board of directors," Zatko said as he began his sworn testimony.</p> <p>"They don't know what data they have, where it lives and where it came from and so, unsurprisingly, they can't protect it," Zatko said. "It doesn't matter who has keys if there are no locks."</p> <p>"Twitter leadership ignored its engineers," he said, in part because "their executive incentives led them to prioritize profit over security."</p> <p>In a statement, Twitter said its hiring process is "independent of any foreign influence" and access to data is managed through a host of measures, including background checks, access controls, and monitoring and detection systems and processes.</p> <p>One issue that didn't come up in the hearing was the question of whether Twitter is accurately counting its active users, an important metric for its advertisers. Tesla CEO Elon Musk, who is trying to get out of a \$44 billion deal to buy Twitter, has argued without evidence that many of Twitter's roughly 238 million daily users are fake or malicious accounts, aka "spam bots."</p> <p>The Delaware judge overseeing the case ruled last week that Musk can include new evidence related to Zatko's allegations in the high-stakes trial, which is set to start Oct. 17. During the hearing, Musk tweeted a popcorn emoji, often used to suggest that one is sitting back in anticipation of unfolding drama.</p> <p>Separately on Tuesday, Twitter's shareholders voted overwhelmingly to approve the deal, according to multiple media reports. Shareholders have been voting remotely on the issue for weeks. The vote was largely a formality, particularly given Musk's efforts to nullify the deal, although it does clear a legal hurdle to closing the sale.</p> <p>Zatko's message echoed one brought to Congress against another social media giant last year. But unlike that Facebook whistleblower, Frances Haugen, Zatko hasn't brought troves of internal documents to back up his claims.</p> <p>Zatko was the head of security for the influential platform until he was fired early this year. He filed a whistleblower complaint in July with Congress, the Justice Department, the Federal Trade Commission and the Securities and Exchange Commission. Among his most serious accusations is that Twitter violated the terms of a 2011 FTC settlement by falsely claiming that it had put stronger measures in place to protect the security and privacy of its users.</p>

Sen. Dick Durbin, an Illinois Democrat who heads the Judiciary Committee, said Zlatos has detailed flaws “that may pose a direct threat to Twitter’s hundreds of millions of users as well as to American democracy.”

“Twitter is an immensely powerful platform and can’t afford gaping vulnerabilities,” he said.

Unknown to Twitter users, there’s far more of their personal information disclosed than they — or sometimes even Twitter itself — realize, Zlatos testified. He said Twitter did not address “basic systemic failures” brought forward by company engineers.

The FTC has been “a little over its head”, and far behind European counterparts, in policing the sort of privacy violations that have occurred at Twitter, Zlatos said.

Sen. Lindsey Graham, a Republican from South Carolina, said one positive result that could come out of Zlatos’s findings would be bipartisan legislation to set up a tighter system of regulation of tech platforms.

“We need to up our game in this country,” he said.

Many of Zlatos’s claims are uncorroborated and appear to have little documentary support. Twitter has called Zlatos’s description of events “a false narrative ... riddled with inconsistencies and inaccuracies” and lacking important context.

Still, Zlatos came off as a convincing whistleblower who has “a lot of credibility in this space,” said Ari Lightman, professor of digital media and marketing at Carnegie Mellon University. But he said many of the problems he raised can likely be found at many other digital technology platforms

“They avoid security protocols in a sense of innovating and running really fast,” Lightman said. “We gave digital platforms so much autonomy at the beginning to grow and develop. Now we’re at a point where we’re, ‘Wait a minute ... This has gotten out of hand.’”

Among the assertions from Zlatos that drew attention from lawmakers Tuesday was that Twitter knowingly allowed the government of India to place its agents on the company payroll, where they had access to highly sensitive data on users. Twitter’s lack of ability to log how employees accessed user accounts made it hard for the company to detect when employees were abusing their access, Zlatos said.

Zlatos said he spoke with “high confidence” about a foreign agent that the government of India placed at Twitter to “understand the negotiations” between India’s ruling party and Twitter about new social media restrictions and how well those negotiations were going.

Zlatos also revealed Tuesday that he was told about a week before his firing that “at least one agent” from the Chinese intelligence service MSS, or the Ministry of State Security, was “on the payroll” at Twitter.

He said he was similarly “surprised and shocked” by an exchange with current Twitter CEO Parag Agrawal about Russia — in which Twitter’s current CEO, who was chief technology officer at the time, asked if it would be possible to “punt” content moderation and surveillance to the Russian government, since Twitter doesn’t really “have the ability and tools to do things correctly.”

“And since they have elections, doesn’t that make them a democracy?” Zlatos recalled Agrawal saying.

Sen. Charles Grassley, the committee’s ranking Republican, said Tuesday that Agrawal declined to testify at the hearing, citing the ongoing legal proceedings with Musk. But the hearing is “more important than Twitter’s civil litigation in Delaware,” Grassley said. Twitter declined to comment on Grassley’s remarks.

In his complaint, Zlatos accused Agrawal as well as other senior executives and board members of numerous violations, including making “false and misleading statements to users and the FTC about the Twitter platform’s security, privacy and integrity.”

	Zatko, 51, first gained prominence in the 1990s as a pioneer in the ethical hacking movement and later worked in senior positions at an elite Defense Department research unit and at Google. He joined Twitter in late 2020 at the urging of then-CEO Jack Dorsey.
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HEADLINE	09/13 'Spectacular surge' Deadbolt ransomware
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/researchers-674-surge-deadbolt/
GIST	<p>Security experts have flagged a spectacular surge in network-attached storage (NAS) devices around the world infected with the Deadbolt ransomware variant.</p> <p>Devices made by Taiwanese company QNAP have been targeted by the group since the start of the year. It appears that the hackers took advantage of a vulnerability in the products to compromise them, causing major problems for the consumers and small businesses that are typical QNAP customers.</p> <p>However, attack surface management vendor Censys has warned that the attacks have kept on coming over the summer.</p> <p>It recorded a global infection count of 2459 on June 27, rising to 7783 on July 15, then 9091 on July 30, and finally a high of 19,029 devices on September 4. That's a 674% increase in just over two months.</p> <p>A majority of these infections were found in the US, with 2472 hosts showing signs of Deadbolt, followed by Germany (1778), and Italy (1383).</p> <p>A spike in infections noted between September 1 and the following day, when the number of affected devices jumped from 7748 to 13,802, may have been caused by a newly exploited zero-day bug, which QNAP described in a notice on September 3.</p> <p>The recent spike is way higher than the normal cadence of new infections recorded by Censys, explained senior security researcher Mark Ellzey.</p> <p>The firm was able to track infected devices due to the way Deadbolt ransomware works, he explained.</p> <p>"Instead of encrypting the entire device, which effectively takes the device offline (and out of the purview of Censys), the ransomware only targets specific backup directories for encryption and vandalizes the web administration interface with an informational message explaining how to remove the infection," said Ellzey.</p> <p>"Due to how this ransomware communicates with the victim, Censys could easily find infected devices exposed on the public internet via this simple search query. Besides broad information about which hosts were infected with Deadbolt, we could also obtain and track every unique bitcoin wallet address used as a ransom since the BTC address used for ransom drops is embedded within the HTML body."</p> <p>QNAP users are urged to upgrade to the latest version to fix the latest vulnerability, tracked as CVE-2022-27593.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/14 DDoS attacks on UK firms surged
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/ddos-attacks-uk-firms-surge-during/
GIST	<p>The volume of DDoS attacks against UK financial institutions surged during the first few months of the Ukraine war, according to new Freedom of Information (FoI) data obtained from the industry regulator.</p> <p>The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) revealed to Picus Security that there have been 14 DDoS attack so far in 2022, versus just five in the whole of 2021.</p>

More tellingly, there were no DDoS attempts on UK finance firms at all this year until March, when four struck. June was the biggest month in the first half of the year, with five attacks recorded.

Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, 2022.

Given the finance sector's important role as critical national infrastructure, Picus Security believes these attacks were the result of state-sponsored and hacktivist operations. A reported increase in DDoS-for-hire websites in the same time period may have helped the latter, [the vendor claimed](#).

However, the surge in attacks could also partly be explained by ransomware actors using DDoS as a tertiary extortion tactic, Picus Security said.

Interestingly, the increase in DDoS occurred even as overall attacks fell year-on-year. There were 55 reports of "material" cyber incidents in the first half of 2022, down 25% from the 73 reported in H1 2021.

The number of these incidents in the first six months of 2022 involving malware and phishing decreased 75% and 50% respectively, versus the same period in 2021.

Material incidents are defined by the FCA as those that cause significant loss of data or control of IT systems, impact a large number of victims, and/or result in unauthorized access and malware deployment.

"UK financial institutions are in the crossfire of the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine and have become a direct target for nation-state attackers and hacktivists seeking to disrupt Ukraine's allies," said Picus Security co-founder, Suleyman Ozarslan.

"While it's encouraging that financial firms reported fewer cyber incidents in the first half of 2022 than they did during the equivalent period in 2021 there is no time for complacency. As threats evolve, financial institutions must continue to proactively harden their defenses. This includes validating that security controls and processes provide protection against the latest risks."

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HEADLINE	09/13 Cyberspies new infostealer malware in Asia
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/cyberspies-drop-new-infostealer-malware-on-govt-networks-in-asia/
GIST	<p>Security researchers have identified new cyber-espionage activity focusing on government entities in Asia, as well as state-owned aerospace and defense firms, telecom companies, and IT organizations.</p> <p>The threat group behind this activity is a distinct cluster previously associated with the "ShadowPad" RAT (remote access trojan). In recent campaigns, the threat actor deployed a much more diverse toolset.</p> <p>According to a report by Symantec's Threat Hunter team that dives into the activity, the intelligence-gathering attacks have been underway since at least early 2021 and are still ongoing.</p> <p>The current campaign appears to be almost exclusively focused on government or public entities in Asia, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Head of government/Prime Minister's office• Government institutions linked to finance• Government-owned aerospace and defense companies• State-owned telecoms companies• State-owned IT organizations• State-owned media companies <p>2022 attack chain</p> <p>Symantec presents an example of an attack that unfolded in April 2022 to showcase how the espionage group compromises its government targets.</p>

The attack begins with implanting a malicious DLL that is side-loaded by launching the executable of a legitimate application to load a .dat file.

In this case, the legitimate application abused by the hackers was an 11-years-old Bitdefender Crash Handler executable.

The initial .dat payload contains encrypted shellcode that can be leveraged to execute commands or additional payloads directly from memory.

Only three days after establishing backdoor access, the threat actors installed ProcDump to snatch user credentials from the Local Security Authority Server Service (LSASS).

On the same day, the LadonGo penetration testing framework was again side-loaded via DLL hijacking and used for network reconnaissance.

Two weeks after the initial intrusion, the attackers returned to the compromised machine to install Mimikatz, a commonly used credentials stealing tool.

Moreover, the hackers attempted to exploit CVE-2020-1472 (Netlogon) against two computers in the same network to elevate their privileges.

The attackers used PsExec to execute Crash Handler and perform the DLL order hijacking trick to load payloads on additional computers in the network.

A month after the intrusion, the threat actors gained privileges to create new user accounts and mounted a snapshot of the active directory server to access user credentials and log files.

Finally, Symantec observed the deployment of Fscan to attempt exploitation of CVE-2021-26855 (Proxylogon) against Exchange Servers in the compromised network.

New custom info-stealer

One of the tools employed by the attacks in recent campaigns is a previously unknown information stealer (Infostealer.Logdatter), which essentially replaced ShadowPad.

The capabilities of this new tool include:

- Keylogging
- Taking screenshots
- Connecting to and querying SQL databases
- Code injection: Reading a file and injecting the contained code into a process
- Downloading files
- Stealing clipboard data

In addition to the info-stealer and all tools mentioned in the previous section, the attackers deployed QuasarRAT, Nirsoft PassView, FastReverseProxy, PlugX, Trochilus RAT, and various PowerSploit scripts.

Attribution

Symantec's Threat Hunter team tied this campaign to the Chinese state-sponsored APT41 and Mustang Panda threat groups based on malicious tools previously linked to these espionage outfits.

For instance, the use of the Bitdefender executable for side-loading malicious code has been observed in campaigns attributed to APT41.

Symantec also highlights the use of the same keylogger deployed APT41 attacks against critical infrastructure organizations based in South East Asia.

	<p>"There is limited evidence to suggest links to past attacks involving the Korplug/PlugX malware and to attacks by a number of known groups, including Blackfly/Grayfly (APT41), and Mustang Panda," the researchers said.</p> <p>Hence, it's likely that Chinese hackers are behind these espionage campaigns, but the evidence isn't compelling enough for a confident attribution.</p> <p>To protect your systems from sophisticated threats, keep all software up to date to prevent exploitation of known vulnerabilities and scrutinize running processes on all computers to identify software implants.</p> <p>An increasing number of APTs are adopting DLL order hijacking, so any software running on the systems that isn't part of the organization's portfolio is a red flag, even if security solutions don't mark it as malicious.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/13 Hackers 'sock puppets' in realistic phishing
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/hackers-now-use-sock-puppets-for-more-realistic-phishing-attacks/
GIST	<p>An Iranian-aligned hacking group uses a new, elaborate phishing technique where they use multiple personas and email accounts to lure targets into thinking its a realistic email conversation.</p> <p>The attackers send an email to targets while CCing another email address under their control and then respond from that email, engaging in a fake conversation.</p> <p>Named 'multi-persona impersonation' (MPI) by researchers at Proofpoint who noticed it for the first time, the technique leverages the psychology principle of "social proof" to obscure logical thinking and add an element of trustworthiness to the phishing threads.</p> <p>TA453 is an Iranian threat group believed to be operating from within the IRGC (Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps), previously seen impersonating journalists to target academics and policy experts in the Middle East.</p> <p>Multiple persona impersonation</p> <p>TA453's new tactic requires far more effort from their side to carry out the phishing attacks, as each target needs to be entrapped in an elaborate realistic conversation held by fake personas, or sock puppets.</p> <p>However, the extra effort pays off, as it creates a realistic-looking exchange of emails, which makes the conversation look legitimate.</p> <p>In all cases, the threat actors used personal email addresses (Gmail, Outlook, AOL, Hotmail) for both the senders and the CCed persons instead of addresses from the impersonated institutions, which is a clear sign of suspicious activity.</p> <p>The malicious payload</p> <p>The documents that targets were tricked into downloading via OneDrive links in TA453's recent campaign are password-protected files that perform template injection.</p> <p>"The downloaded template, dubbed Korg by Proofpoint, has three macros: Module1.bas, Module2.bas, and ThisDocument.cls," details the report.</p> <p>"The macros collect information such as username, list of running processes along with the user's public IP from my-ip.io and then exfiltrates that information using the Telegram API."</p>

	The researchers couldn't get past the reconnaissance information beaconing stage but assumed that additional exploitation occurs in subsequent steps to give the remote threat actors code execution capabilities on the hosts.
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HEADLINE	09/13 China govt. hackers use diverse toolset
SOURCE	https://therecord.media/chinese-govt-hackers-using-diverse-toolset-to-target-asian-prime-ministers-telecoms/?web_view=true
GIST	<p>Hackers associated with the Chinese military are leveraging a wide range of legitimate software packages in order to load their malware payloads and target government leaders across Asia, according to the Symantec Threat Hunter team.</p> <p>The attacks involve a widely-used technique known as Dynamic-link library (DLL) side-loading. The tactic takes advantage of how Microsoft Windows applications handle DLL files and involves malware that places a malicious DLL file in a Windows' WinSxS directory so that the operating system loads it instead of the legitimate file.</p> <p>The Symantec Threat Hunter team said the campaign targeted a range of government and state-owned organizations in several Asian countries, including the offices of multiple prime ministers or heads of government.</p> <p>Government organizations tied to finance, aerospace and defense companies were also targeted alongside state-owned telecoms, IT organizations and media companies.</p> <p>Dick O'Brien, principal intelligence analyst for the Symantec Threat Hunter team, told The Record that what stood out most to him was how frequently they see this group use DLL side-loading in their attacks.</p> <p>"This tactic has been known for a very long time now, but it is obviously still yielding results for them. You can't just use any application for it," O'Brien said. "Most software now has built in-protections against the technique, which is why the attackers are installing old software for this purpose. In some cases, the applications used are more than a decade old."</p> <p>Symantec researchers said the campaign is tied to a distinct group of espionage attackers previously tied to the use of the ShadowPad remote access Trojan — a tool used used widely by an ever-increasing number of People's Liberation Army (PLA) and Ministry of State Security (MSS)-linked groups. Its origins are linked to known MSS contractors who were first seen using the tool in their own operations before it was spread among other government groups.</p> <p>The latest campaign started in 2021 and is "almost exclusively focused" on intelligence gathering on government or public entities.</p> <p>Symantec found that the attacks leveraged a wide range of legitimate software packages in order to load their malware payloads, with the attackers using multiple software packages in a single attack.</p> <p>"In many cases, the software used was old and outdated versions of software, including security software, graphics software, and web browsers. In some cases legitimate system files from the legacy operating system Windows XP were used," the researchers explained.</p> <p>"The reason for using outdated versions is that most current versions of the software used would have mitigation against side-loading built-in."</p> <p>After gaining access through a backdoor, the attackers typically used tools to steal credentials and then moved to using network scanning tools as a way to find other computers that would be easy to exploit.</p>

	<p>As an example, the researchers went through an incident that targeted a government-owned organization in the education sector in Asia. The attack began on April 23 and the hackers stayed on the network until July.</p> <p>While inside the network, the attackers attempted to take advantage of CVE-2020-1472 – a Netlogon vulnerability the U.S. agencies said was one of the most exploited bugs in 2021. Symantec noted that the attackers also used CVE-2021- 26855, another widely-exploited Microsoft vulnerability.</p> <p>By May 16, the hackers began to move laterally around the organization’s network, using a range of information stealers, keyloggers and more to steal data. The hackers also took screenshots and collected other data during their time in the network.</p> <p>According to Symantec, there is evidence linking the group behind the attacks to previous incidents involving the Korplug/PlugX malware and to attacks by a number of known groups, including Blackfly/Grayfly (APT41), and Mustang Panda.</p> <p>Other tools found by Symantec researchers had ties to a long-running campaign involving Korplug/Plug X targeting the Roman Catholic Church.</p> <p>Some of the keylogging tools deployed in this attack were previously seen in attacks against critical infrastructure in South East Asia, the researchers added.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/12 Catching up to the threat of DeFi exploits
SOURCE	https://fortune.com/2022/09/12/law-enforcement-defi-exploits/?&web_view=true
GIST	<p>At the end of August, the FBI issued a public service announcement on the susceptibility for cybercrime in DeFi (decentralized finance), the growing crypto segment of financial applications backed by blockchain technology. Of the \$1.3 billion stolen in cryptocurrencies in the first three months of 2022, 97% came from DeFi platforms.</p> <p>The warning did nothing to deter cybercriminals, who launched flash loan attacks—where someone borrows funds and then manipulates the price of the asset before quickly reselling it—on the Avalanche blockchain and the New Free DAO protocol the following week that totaled nearly \$2 million. According to data from investment platform DeFiYield, \$211 million was lost in decentralized finance hacks just in August.</p> <p>Cybersecurity experts say the timing of the FBI warning—several years after DeFi exploits began—illustrates how slow governmental agencies and technological solutions have been to catch up to the vulnerabilities of the ecosystem.</p> <p>“Law enforcement is reactionary to what’s happening out there,” said Chris Tarbell, the co-founder of the cybersecurity firm NAXO and a former FBI special agent who was instrumental in taking down the notorious Silk Road marketplace. “It takes time because it’s such an advanced technology.”</p> <p>‘Logical target’</p> <p>As the apocryphal story goes, a reporter once asked Willie Sutton why he robbed banks. “Because that’s where the money is,” he replied.</p> <p>Michael Rosmer, cofounder of DeFiYield, said the same logic attracts cybercriminals to the world of decentralized finance, where transactions are irreversible—unlike in traditional banking—and law enforcement is still figuring out how the platforms work.</p> <p>“Where else can you go where you can steal really large amounts of money with no recourse?” Rosmer told <i>Fortune</i>. “That makes crypto a logical target until we can somehow turn around and come up with better systems for addressing this.”</p>

According to DeFiYield's data, the \$211 million lost last month still pales in comparison to August 2021, when cybercriminals stole an estimated \$827 million. Rosmer clarified that the decrease does not mean there is any less of a threat, attributing the figure to the cryptocurrency industry's vastly lower market cap, as well as the shifting nature of DeFi hacks.

Previous exploits targeted lending protocols—like Binance Smart Chain-based protocol Meerkat Finance, which [lost](#) \$31 million in user funds the day after it launched in 2021—as well as other [complex DeFi tools](#) like liquidity pools and automated market makers.

Rosmer said that the main target in 2022 has been bridges, a type of technology that connects different blockchains, allowing users to move cryptocurrencies among chains. The biggest example from 2022 was the attack on popular play-to-earn game *Axie Infinity*, which lost an estimated \$620 million in March when cybercriminals [targeted](#) the bridge to its Ethereum-linked sidechain.

The attacks have continued. Just last month, hackers [exploited](#) the Nomad bridge—which connected blockchains such as Ethereum and Avalanche—for \$190 million.

“This is a challenging technical problem,” Rosmer told *Fortune*. “The more value that is being exchanged between two chains, the more attractive the pot exists to make it so that you would want to attack it.”

Potential ‘hell-state’

Ryan Kalember, an executive vice president at cybersecurity firm Proofpoint, said that DeFi is in a tricky position where it's attractive for cybercriminals to target, but not necessarily valuable enough for companies to develop sufficient defenses.

“You could end up with this hell-state where it's not worth enough to secure, but it's still worth enough for cybercriminals to go after it,” he said.

The problem is exacerbated by the international nature of cybercrime, which makes it difficult for U.S.-based law enforcement to act. “If you can't get Edward Snowden in Russia,” said Rosmer, “how are you going to get some guy who just stole \$10 million from a DeFi protocol in Russia?”

Governmental agencies are starting to figure out new strategies, such as the U.S. Department of the Treasury sanctioning the open-source cryptocurrency mixer Tornado Cash, which cybercriminal organizations like North Korea's Lazarus Group [have used](#) to launder hundreds of millions of dollars, including from August's Nomad heist.

Even so, officials are just starting to wake up to the threat. “It's complicated, it's new, and it's poorly understood, especially by law enforcement,” Kalember said.

While Rosmer said that the FBI warning was a step in the right direction, he was skeptical it would have much of an impact. For him, the onus is on technology companies like DeFiYield to ramp up security.

“This is like the jungle,” he told *Fortune*. “We are working on trying to make the jungle safe and turn it into a zoo.”

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HEADLINE	09/14 US to redirect Afghanistan frozen assets
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/us-policy/2022/09/14/taliban-frozen-assets-afghanistan-biden/
GIST	The Biden administration on Wednesday announced it will create a new fund out of some of Afghanistan's frozen central bank reserves, aiming to alleviate the country's mounting humanitarian

crisis without enriching the Taliban, which rejected previous attempts at a compromise deal earlier this year.

In a statement, the Treasury Department said a new oversight body will deploy \$3.5 billion of Afghanistan's central bank reserves to help stabilize the country's ravaged economy. The fund — which will be run in part by Swiss government officials and Afghan economic experts — can be used to help the country pay for critical imports, such as electricity, and will not be accessible to Taliban officials, according to the department.

The announcement follows more than a year of fighting over whether the Biden administration should return the \$7 billion in Afghan assets that became inaccessible to the country's leaders after the Taliban's rise to power in August 2021. Economists say the freezing of these funds has fueled the collapse of Afghanistan's economy and its hunger crisis, but the Biden administration and other analysts have said the Taliban cannot be trusted to administer such substantial amounts of money. Biden officials also announced in February that half of the \$7 billion in funds would be separately earmarked for litigation filed by the victims of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

The deterioration of Afghanistan's economy has put pressure on U.S. officials to explore how they might be able to turn the funds back over to the country's central bank. In June, U.S. officials met with Taliban leaders in Doha, Qatar, to discuss potential compromises that would allow technocrats at Afghanistan's central bank to use the funds under close supervision to ensure the money does not fall into Taliban hands. The Taliban has rejected those proposals.

With a deal elusive, economists and aid groups have grown increasingly concerned about Afghanistan's economy amid an exodus of capital and people. The United Nations estimated in August that approximately 4 million children are malnourished and close to 95 percent of the country is not getting enough to eat. Some economists say the new fund is insufficient to meet the country's needs, given that the central bank reserves are critical for shoring up a currency that has cratered. A severe drought and a devastating hurricane have also combined to make what some experts have called the world's greatest humanitarian catastrophe.

"This move can't possibly compensate for the harm to the Afghan economy and millions of people who are starving, in large part because of the U.S. confiscation of Afghanistan's central bank reserves," said Mark Weisbrot, co-director of the Center for Economic and Policy Research, a liberal think tank.

Still, the United States is leaving open the possibility that Afghanistan could eventually reclaim the bank assets in full. Deputy Treasury Secretary Wally Adeyemo sent a letter on Tuesday to the Afghanistan central bank saying that it must meet three conditions — demonstrate political independence from the Taliban, implement anti-money-laundering guidelines, and add a "third-party monitor" — before the United States could consider returning the funds.

"The shortcomings of economic management are contributing to the economic and humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan," Adeyemo wrote in the letter.

He added, "There is currently no institution in Afghanistan that can guarantee that these funds would be used only for the benefit of the people of Afghanistan."

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HEADLINE	09/13 Plea deal negotiations for AQ 9/11 plotters
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/news/justice/gop-condemns-biden-plea-negotiations-911-plotters
GIST	Republicans are condemning the Biden administration's decision to enter into plea deal negotiations with the al Qaeda mastermind and facilitators of the 9/11 terrorist attacks — which could take the death penalty off the table .

Negotiations between prosecutors and defense attorneys at [Guantanamo Bay](#) could [reportedly](#) result in [guilty plea deals in which capital punishment would not be a possible](#) punishment for 9/11 mastermind [Khalid Sheikh Mohammed](#) and his four co-defendants.

Top Republicans have criticized any such possibility.

“Joe Biden’s allies are negotiating lesser sentences for 9/11 attackers,” Rep. Jim Jordan (R-OH), the ranking member on the House Judiciary Committee, [tweeted](#). “If they won’t punish terrorists, how can we trust them to lock up criminals in your neighborhood?”

The House Armed Services Committee’s Republicans [said](#): “The Biden admin is doing the unthinkable – they are considering offering the terrorists, who organized those attacks, plea deals to escape the death penalty” and that “these terrorists killed thousands of innocent people – they deserve the death penalty.”

After 21 years, justice has yet to be attained in the case against the plotters of the [9/11](#) terrorist attacks, and a year of plea negotiations and canceled hearings at [Guantanamo Bay](#) has [pushed any potential trial back even further](#).

Ronald Flesvig, a spokesman for the Office of Military Commissions, confirmed that “the parties are currently engaged in preliminary plea negotiations.”

In the more than two decades since the terror attacks that killed nearly 3,000 people, the five men said to be responsible for the planning and execution of the plot have yet to stand trial.

Rep. Mike Turner (R-OH), the ranking member on the House Intelligence Committee, criticized any effort to take capital punishment off the table for Mohammed and his co-defendants.

“Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and his accomplices planned the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks [and are] responsible for the deaths of nearly 3,000 Americans,” Turner told the *Washington Examiner* in March. “It is unconscionable that military prosecutors would even entertain the idea of a plea agreement that removed the possibility of the death penalty.”

One key unresolved question for getting the 9/11 trial started is the [admissibility of confessions](#) obtained by the FBI after the CIA subjected them to “enhanced interrogation techniques” — called “torture” by some.

“At a bare minimum, we are at least one year away from trial,” Air Force Col. Matthew McCall, the presiding judge for the 9/11 case, said in September 2021, [shortly after taking over the case](#). Hearings were held around the 20th anniversary of the attacks last year, but the case has made little pretrial progress since then. The co-defendants appeared in court a year ago for the first time since February 2020 [due to delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic](#). There were also pretrial hearings held in November 2021, but no 9/11-related hearings since then.

Mohammed, dubbed “KSM” and [described as](#) “the principal architect of the 9/11 attacks” in the 9/11 Commission Report, was a close ally of Osama bin Laden and was repeatedly waterboarded in numerous sessions while in U.S. custody. Mohammed is being tried alongside four co-defendants: his nephew, Ammar al Baluchi, who sent money transfers to 9/11 hijackers inside the United States; alleged hijacking trainer Walid bin Attash; 9/11 facilitator Ramzi bin al Shibh; and al Qaeda money man Mustafa al Hawsawi.

The 9/11 trial delay comes as the Biden administration has continued to say it wants to shut down detainee operations at Guantanamo Bay. Approximately 780 total suspected terrorists are known to have been detained at Guantanamo Bay since 2002, and it is believed that 36 remain, according to the [Guantanamo Docket](#) tracker.

Republicans have sought to [block](#) Biden’s efforts to shut the facility down as well.

HEADLINE	09/14 Sahel to the Horn terror threat assessment
SOURCE	https://greydynamics.com/the-sahel-to-the-horn-terror-threat-assessment/
GIST	<p>Summary.</p> <p>Terrorist organisations such as the Islamic State (IS) and Al-Qaeda (AQ) are marching south, from the Sahel to the coast of Africa. Chatter amongst these groups is indicating that after successful campaigns in the Sahel, the next target is Ghana and the Ivory Coast. Both of which have so far been spared from the wave of terrorist activity. That is gripping the Sahelian nations of Mali and Burkina Faso.</p> <p>Key Judgement 1: It is highly likely that both AQ and IS will mount attacks in Ghana and the Ivory Coast in the next 6 months as groups move from the Sahel to the coast.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Violence has already started to spread south from Burkina Faso into the Ivory Coast. There have been 13 cross-border attacks in the last year on the Ivory coast. (source)• Furthermore, Ghana has become surrounded by countries that are facing increased terrorist activity. Burkina Faso to the north and Togo to the east have both experienced increased activity from IS and AQ. (source) (source)• The continued success of IS in the Sahel has emboldened the group to continue its march south to the coast. With chatter amongst the terrorist group seemingly targeting Ghana next (source)• Because of the proximity of Burkina Faso and Ghana. Attacks in Burkina Faso have already begun spilling over across the border into Ghana as terrorist groups pursue those fleeing. (source)• Additionally, Ghana is already being used by terror groups as a central warehouse. A place to regroup and plan attacks in neighbouring countries. (source) <p>Key Judgement 2: Over the next 6 months it is likely that countries in the Gulf of Guinea will increase attempts to minimise the impact of terrorist activity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recent reports on social media suggested that Boko Haram has invaded Ghana, the country's Interior Minister Ambrose Dery rubbished this. (source) (source)• Previously Dery had warned Ghanaians to remain vigilant about the terrorist threat to its country. The government has enacted a "See something, say something campaign." (source)• Furthermore, the President of Ghana has said that the country is taking extraordinary measures. This is to prevent Ghana from becoming the latest victim of terrorism that is sweeping across Africa. (source)• The Ghanaian and Ivorian militaries have also been taking part in military training exercises being conducted by the West. Hoping that they are ready when the attacks take place. (source) <p>Key Judgement 3: It is likely that over the next 6 months AQ and IS will attempt to increase recruitment from coastal countries as it has done in the Sahel.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Because IS and AQ affiliates in Africa are not like traditional armies it remains to be seen if beefing up security will work. IS and AQ target populations with grievances and spread ideas to help with recruitment. (source)• On the 9th of August 2022, Ghana's UN representative highlighted how the COVID-19 pandemic has crippled the economies of many countries trying to fight violent extremist groups. Therefore, rendering the ability of countries like Ghana to meet the fiscal needs of its population. (source)• The May 2022, West African Centre for Combating Extremism (WACCE) report highlighted that Ghana has 352 unresolved chieftaincy conflicts. Making its northern border regions prime for exploitation by violent extremist groups. As it seeks to gain a foothold in a so far untouched country. (source)• Furthermore, the WACCE report highlighted the northern regions of Ghana are less sensitive to extremist recruitment, as these regions have little to no governance and lack the basic human security needed. (source)
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HEADLINE	09/13 Pakistan roadside bomb death toll rises
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/death-toll-overnight-bombing-pakistan-rises-89867579

<p>GIST</p>	<p>PESHAWAR, Pakistan -- Eight people have been killed in a roadside bombing that targeted an anti-Taliban village elder's vehicle in northwestern Pakistan, police said.</p> <p>Saeed Khan, a senior police official in Swat, said the slain head of a village peace committee, Idrees Khan, was traveling in the area when the roadside bomb hit his vehicle. He said that initial reports suggested the bombing killed five but later they concluded eight people had died, including two policemen.</p> <p>In a statement, Mohammad Khurasani, the spokesman for the Pakistani Taliban militant group — known as Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan — claimed responsibility. He said that the slain head of the peace committee had been supporting security forces for the past several years.</p> <p>The Pakistani Taliban have been holding peace talks since May in Kabul, Afghanistan. But isolated militant attacks and security raids on militant hideouts have continued, raising fears these talks could break in the coming months, if not weeks.</p> <p>A formal cease-fire between Pakistan and the TTP is still in place.</p> <p>The talks in Kabul are hosted by the Afghan Taliban, a separate group allied with the Pakistani Taliban. The Taliban seized power in Afghanistan a year ago. That takeover has emboldened the Pakistani Taliban, whose fighters and leaders, officials say, have been hiding in Afghanistan.</p> <p>Islamabad has demanded that the new Taliban rulers in Afghanistan prevent militant groups, including TTP, from using Afghan territory for attacks inside Pakistan. Before the Taliban takeover next door, Islamabad and Kabul had often traded blame and accused each other of sheltering militants.</p>
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Suspicious, Unusual

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<p>HEADLINE</p>	<p>09/13 UK targeted late-1960s US civil rights leader</p>
<p>SOURCE</p>	<p>https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/13/revealed-how-uk-targeted-american-civil-rights-leader-stokely-carmichael-covert</p>
<p>GIST</p>	<p>The British government targeted the American civil rights leader Stokely Carmichael and sought to weaken the Black Power movement with covert disinformation campaigns, recently declassified documents have revealed.</p> <p>The effort was the work of a secret unit known as the Information Research Department, based in London and part of the Foreign Office, which created and distributed literature from fake sources as part of a broader effort to destabilise cold war enemies.</p> <p>Though focused primarily on the Soviet Union and China, leftwing liberation groups and leaders the UK saw as threats to its interests, the discoveries reveal the IRD from the late 1960s sought to counter more diverse targets too.</p> <p>“We can see a large-scale attempt to shape events overseas, but one that was moving away from communism and targeting whole new areas. This shows the breadth, scope and scale of British covert information operations,” said Rory Cormac, an expert in the history of subversion and intelligence who found the material when researching his recent book, <i>How to Stage a Coup: And Ten Other Lessons from the World of Secret Statecraft</i>.</p> <p>The effort against Carmichael, a firebrand orator who travelled to west Africa in part to escape harassment by US law enforcement agencies, aimed to portray the prominent Black Power leader as a foreign interloper in Africa who was contemptuous of the inhabitants of the continent.</p>

Based [mainly in Guinea from July 1969](#), the 28-year-old activist had become a vocal advocate of socialist, pan-Africanist ideologies, which worried British officials.

The documents show the IRD created a fake west African organisation called The Black Power – Africa's Heritage Group, which produced a pamphlet calling Carmichael an “unbidden prophet from America” who had no place on the continent.

“Enough is enough – why Stokely must go! – and do his thing elsewhere,” read the pamphlet, alleging Carmichael was “weaving a bloody trail of chaos in the name of Pan-Africanism” and was controlled by Kwame Nkrumah, the independence leader and former president of Ghana who had been deposed in a coup in 1966.

The IRD's effort did not attack Carmichael as a pro-Soviet or communist stooge, a hitherto frequent line of attack. Instead, the unit sought to portray its target as a traitor to other Black Power activists with a patronising attitude to African peoples.

By coming to Africa, Carmichael had “deserted the cause” in the US “which needs him more than we do” and had been arrogant in preaching Black Power to a continent “where it already truly belongs”, the pamphlet said. It also claimed Carmichael was a “burning zealot”, who seemed to imagine Africans as “savages” and compared him unfavourably with other radical activists who had recently arrived on the continent from the US such as Eldridge Cleaver, an early leader of the Black Panthers, who was living in Algeria.

“We are capable of formulating our own plans for our part in the struggle for equal rights and freedom for the Black man everywhere ... and when we are launching ‘Black Power’ it will be our own brand ‘African Power’ and not the African American brainchild Stokely is trying to impose on us,” the fake statement read.

The smear operation against Carmichael received enthusiastic endorsement from officials within the IRD and elsewhere in the British government, including in the Foreign Office west African department. It came amid rising concern in Whitehall about the Black Power movement elsewhere in the world too. The IRD was particularly worried by the movement's potential influence in the Caribbean.

In February 1969, the IRD learned of a Black Power conference to be held in Bermuda the following August and decided that rather than ban the event, it should attempt to discredit it. British intelligence services were asked for information on Black Power leaders, and any evidence of Soviet, Cuban or Guyanese links to the movement. This was only available from US intelligence services that had begun investigating links between black radicalism in the Caribbean and advocates of Black Power in the US from around 1968.

The IRD then prepared a series of articles for distribution to newspapers in the Caribbean and elsewhere. These accused the Black Power movement of being exploited by Havana and claimed the forthcoming conference would ruin Bermuda economically.

The IRD also prepared and distributed an article about Black Power leaders targeting Trinidad. This suggested that communists were behind Black Power aspirations on the island, and that outside powers operated “with the collusion of ambitious locals seeking their own ends”.

Some tactics in Bermuda were rejected for fear of stoking racial tensions, and local officials in the Caribbean were not supportive of the campaign. “There were limits to what the IRD was prepared to do. In the Caribbean, the concern was that racial tension could lead to riots and disruption of tourism and so the wider economy. In general, the IRD was happy to insinuate something without evidence but not with outright lying,” Cormac said.

In 1969, the IRD also created a new fake group: The Organisation of African Students for African Power. This was supposedly based in East Germany and adopted contemporary radical New Left ideas, “proclaiming a plague on both” the capitalist west and the Soviet bloc.

The IRD felt this provided a better platform to “damage opponents” than the dated nationalist approach, while being difficult to trace back to Britain because many similar groups had genuinely sprung up in the late 1960s. The group attempted to link a wave of assassinations in Africa to the Soviets.

The British were not alone in using such tactics. The KGB committed significant resources to disinformation campaigns throughout the cold war and achieved some significant successes. One pamphlet produced by the Soviet service reported accurate American statistics and real cases of race crimes in order to turn African audiences against the US. It was made to look like it had been written by an African-American organisation agitating against the Ku Klux Klan.

The CIA built extensive networks across sub-Saharan Africa, and used cultural ambassadors such as Louis Armstrong as a [“Trojan horse” for intelligence-gathering](#).

The agency continued to be interested in Carmichael after his flight from the US in 1969 and “wrote typescript memos on [his] travels abroad during a period when he had dropped from public view”, a [summary of activities](#) released by the agency in 2007 revealed.

“The UK effort was a lot smaller than that of the Americans or the Soviets and more restrained too, but it was broad in scope. The UK was doing this all over the world,” Cormac said. “Information operations were seen as a force multiplier. It is clear there was a recognition that we were small and in decline but that this was a clever way of maintaining a global role on the cheap.”

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HEADLINE	09/13 Report: ‘uncharted territory of destruction’
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/sep/13/world-heading-into-uncharted-territory-of-destruction-says-climate-report
GIST	<p>The world’s chances of avoiding the worst ravages of climate breakdown are diminishing rapidly, as we enter “uncharted territory of destruction” through our failure to cut greenhouse gas emissions and take the actions needed to stave off catastrophe, leading scientists have said.</p> <p>Despite intensifying warnings in recent years, governments and businesses have not been changing fast enough, according to the United in Science report published on Tuesday. The consequences are already being seen in increasingly extreme weather around the world, and we are in danger of provoking “tipping points” in the climate system that will mean more rapid and in some cases irreversible shifts.</p> <p>Recent flooding in Pakistan, which the country’s climate minister claimed had covered a third of the country in water, is the latest example of extreme weather that is devastating swathes of the globe. The heatwave across Europe including the UK this summer, prolonged drought in China, a megadrought in the US and near-famine conditions in parts of Africa also reflect increasingly prevalent extremes of weather.</p> <p>The secretary general of the United Nations, António Guterres, said: “There is nothing natural about the new scale of these disasters. They are the price of humanity’s fossil fuel addiction. This year’s United in Science report shows climate impacts heading into uncharted territory of destruction.”</p> <p>The world is as likely as not to see temperatures more than 1.5C above pre-industrial levels, within the next five years, the report found. Governments agreed to focus on holding temperatures within the 1.5C limit at the landmark UN Cop26 climate summit in Glasgow last November, but their pledges and actions to cut emissions fell short of what was needed, the report found.</p>

Since Cop26, the invasion of Ukraine and soaring gas prices have prompted some governments to return to fossil fuels, including coal. Guterres warned of the danger: “Each year we double down on this fossil fuel addiction, even as the symptoms get rapidly worse.”

The world was also failing to adapt to the consequences of the climate crisis, the report found. Guterres condemned rich countries that had promised the developing world assistance but failed to deliver. “It is a scandal that developed countries have failed to take adaptation seriously, and shrugged off their commitments to help the developing world,” he said.

Rich countries should provide \$40bn (£34.5bn) a year at once to help countries adapt, he said, and increase that to \$300bn a year by 2030.

The question of adaptation to the impacts of extreme weather, and the “loss and damage” that vulnerable countries are experiencing, is likely to be one of the key issues at the forthcoming Cop27 UN climate talks in Egypt in November. [Leading figures are concerned](#) about the prospects for that conference, as geopolitical upheavals have imperilled the fragile consensus reached at Glasgow.

Tasneem Essop, the executive director of the Climate Action Network, said governments must prepare for Cop27 with action plans that reflected the urgency of the crisis. “The terrifying picture painted by the United in Science report is already a lived reality for millions of people facing recurring climate disasters. The science is clear, yet the addiction to fossil fuels by greedy corporations and rich countries is resulting in losses and damages for communities who have done the least to cause the current climate crisis.”

She added: “For those already experiencing the climate emergency, particularly in the global south, the Cop27 conference in Egypt must agree to new funding to help them rebuild their lives.”

The United in Science report was coordinated by the World Meteorological Organization, and involves the UN Environment Programme, the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, the World Climate Research Programme, the Global Carbon Project, the UK’s Met Office and the Urban Climate Change Research Network.

Separately, researchers from Oxford University said shifting the global economy to a low-carbon footing would save the world at least \$12tn (£10.4bn) by 2050, compared with current levels of fossil fuel use. Rising prices for gas have shown the vulnerability of economies dependent on fossil fuels.

The study, published in the journal *Joule* on Tuesday, found that moving rapidly to renewable power and other forms of clean energy would benefit the economy, as the costs of green technology have plummeted.

Rupert Way, a postdoctoral researcher at Oxford’s Smith School of Enterprise and the Environment, a co-author of the paper, said: “Past models predicting high costs for transitioning to zero-carbon energy have deterred companies from investing and made governments nervous about setting policies that will accelerate the energy transition and cut reliance on fossil fuels. But clean energy costs have fallen sharply over the last decade, much faster than those models expected.”

The United in Science report found:

- The past seven years were the hottest on record and there is a 48% chance during at least one year in the next five that the annual mean temperature will temporarily be 1.5C higher than the 1850-1900 average.
- Global mean temperatures are forecast to be between 1.1C and 1.7C higher than pre-industrial levels from 2022-2026, and there is a 93% probability that at least one year in the next five will be warmer than the hottest year on record, 2016.
- [Dips in carbon dioxide emissions](#) during the lockdowns associated with the Covid-19 pandemic were temporary, and carbon dioxide emissions from fossil fuels returned to pre-pandemic levels last year.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National pledges on greenhouse gas emissions are insufficient to hold global heating to 1.5C above pre-industrial levels. Climate-related disasters are causing \$200m in economic losses a day. Nearly half the planet – 3.3 to 3.6 billion people – are living in areas highly vulnerable to the impacts of the climate crisis, but fewer than half of countries have early warning systems for extreme weather. As global heating increases, “tipping points” in the climate system cannot be ruled out. These include the drying out of the Amazon rainforest, the melting of the ice caps and the weakening of the Atlantic meridional overturning circulation, known as the Gulf stream. By the 2050s, more than 1.6 billion people living in 97 cities will be regularly exposed to three-month average temperatures reaching at least 35C.
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HEADLINE	09/13 Dead man in tent full of explosive devices
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/regional/man-dead-in-tent-explosive-devices-rural-clark-county/283-d9eda2ee-d386-44a6-b161-1122e3f91fc7
GIST	<p>AMBOY, Wash. — A man was found dead in a tent full of improvised explosive devices in rural north Clark County on Monday night, the Clark County Sheriff's Office (CCSO) reported.</p> <p>At around 8:10 p.m. Monday, a driver called 911 after they were flagged down by a woman who said her boyfriend was unresponsive in a tent at their campsite. Deputies responded to the area, east of Chelatchie Prairie off U.S. Forest Service Forest Road 54, and were led by the woman to where she and her boyfriend had been camping.</p> <p>The woman told deputies her boyfriend was possibly setting trip wires and traps around their tent the day before. As deputies got closer to the tent, they saw what looked like an improvised explosive device set around the tent. Deputies retreated and bomb technicians were called to the scene.</p> <p>A robot with the Metropolitan Explosive Disposal Unit (MEDU) was sent in to check the tent and confirmed that a dead man was inside. After several hours removing multiple suspicious devices from the tent and the surrounding area, deputies and an investigator with the medical examiner's office were able to remove the body from the tent.</p> <p>This is an ongoing investigation. The sheriff's office is not releasing the name of the man who died at this time. His manner of death will be determined by the medical examiner's office.</p> <p>Southwest Washington Regional Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) and Tactical Emergency Medical Support (TEMS) assisted MEDU, CCSO and the medical examiner's office in the investigation.</p>
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Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	09/14 Feds bust human smuggling ring at border
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2022/09/14/mexico-human-smuggling-ring-eight-people-arrested/7301663128954/
GIST	<p>Sept. 14 (UPI) -- The Justice Department announced Tuesday its anti-trafficking task force has dismantled a human smuggling ring at the United States-Mexico border leading to the arrest of eight people.</p> <p>The indictment, which was unsealed Tuesday, said Joint Task Force Alpha broke up an illegal operation that smuggled migrants into the U.S. for profit. The indictment says the network was led by Erminia</p>

Serrano Piedra, also known as "Boss Lady," who allegedly made millions of dollars illegally transporting migrants from Mexico, Guatemala and Colombia into the United States.

"The charges announced today are just the latest example of these efforts' success," Attorney General [Merrick Garland said in a statement](#). "The Justice Department will continue to bring our full resources to bear to combat the human smuggling and trafficking groups that endanger our communities, abuse and exploit migrants, and threaten our national security."

Piedra's co-conspirators were identified as Kevin Daniel Nuber, Laura Nuber, Lloyd Bexley, Jeremy Dickens, Katie Ann Garcia, Oliveria Piedra-Campuzana and Pedro Hairo Abrigo, the department said.

According to the indictment, Piedra's organization transported paying migrants in suitcases, repurposed water tanks and wooden crates on flatbed trucks.

"They packed people in [dangerous, tight spaces](#), with limited ventilation in high temperatures, risking people's lives and safety for money," said Assistant Attorney General Kenneth Polite Jr. "The sole purpose of this conspiracy was personal profit. It has allegedly generated millions of dollars in illegal proceeds."

The human smuggling network allegedly used drivers to pick up migrants near the border and transport them into the United States. The indictment says the migrants were harbored at "stash houses" along the way in Laredo and Austin, Texas. Drivers were allegedly paid as much as \$2,500 for each migrant they illegally transported, according to the Department of Justice.

"Sadly, this case is an example of what we see in our district, too many times, especially in our border communities," said U.S. Attorney Jennifer Lowery for the Southern District of Texas. "Our Laredo office works continuously with our valued partners to bring to justice those who allegedly put profits ahead of everything else. No amount of money should be a substitute for human life."

Since its creation in 2021, JTFA's work has resulted in criminal charges and more than 100 domestic and international arrests against organizers and facilitators of human smuggling activities, [according to the Department of Homeland Security](#).

"At DHS, countering human smuggling is a moral imperative, a law enforcement priority and a necessity for our national security," said Deputy Secretary John Tien of the Department of Homeland Security. "It is a central plank of our efforts to address irregular migration across the western hemisphere, and to hold transnational criminal organizations accountable for perpetrating vile and horrific crimes."

The Justice Department will work to forfeit three properties in the Austin area, which were purchased with proceeds from the illegal smuggling ring and used to facilitate the organization's criminal activity.

The department is also seeking monetary judgments against Piedra and two of her co-conspirators for nearly \$2.3 million.

"This human smuggling organization operated on an enormous scale, placing a high value on financial profit, while putting migrants' lives at great risk," Polite said. "JTFA will continue to use all means necessary to pursue and dismantle criminal smuggling networks and protect the vulnerable populations they exploit."

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HEADLINE	09/14 Florida sharp rise anti-Semitic incidents
SOURCE	https://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/crime/article265740986.html
GIST	Florida saw a sharp increase in anti-Semitic incidents last year, according to a new report from the Anti-Defamation League, the New York-based organization that tracks anti-Semitic incidents and other extremist activity across the country.

The state saw a 50% increase in anti-Semitic incidents in 2021 compared to the year before, and Florida had the third most anti-Semitic incidents of any state in the country, behind only New York and California, according to the report. Nationally, 2021 saw a 34% increase in anti-Semitic incidents across the country.

The ADL found that Florida is home to an overlapping network of white supremacists and anti-Semitic groups responsible for organizing numerous rallies and distributing hateful propaganda. All told, the ADL's Center on Extremism found more than 400 instances of white supremacist propaganda being distributed between January 2020 and August 2022.

The report also notes that Florida is home to the most people charged in connection with the Jan. 6 insurrection, including members of the Proud Boys and the Oath Keepers.

The report fills a gap left by Florida's notable undercounting of hate crimes, according to experts. Last year, for example, then-Miami Police Chief Art Acevedo told the Miami Herald he was ordering a review of why the department had mistakenly reported no hate crimes as part of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's annual collection of hate crime data.

"Florida has been undercounting hate crimes for some time," said Brian Levin, a criminal justice professor at California State University San Bernardino and director of the university's Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism. "There's no state in the country that has this poor of a response from its largest cities."

Levin said that his center's analysis of crime stats in 2022 and 2021 has also shown sharp increases in anti-Semitic hate crimes.

The ADL report highlights national anti-Semitic groups, such as the Goyim Defense League, which has a Florida presence and has organized events in Florida, as well as groups such as the National Socialist Movement — an openly pro-Hitler group — that is led by a Florida man, Burt Colucci, of Kissimmee.

The groups organized numerous rallies throughout the year, including demonstrations outside the conservative group Turning Point USA's Student Action Summit in Tampa in July 2022, a May 2022 protest outside Walt Disney World and a February demonstration outside the Daytona 400. The groups displayed signs with anti-Semitic slogans and Nazi imagery, such as swastikas, along with anti-LGBTQ and racist messages.

At a January 2022 rally in Orlando near the University of Central Florida campus, three demonstrators, including Colucci, were charged with assault after allegedly attacking a Jewish student and stealing the phone he was using to record them. The three men are scheduled to go to trial at the end of October.

The Goyim Defense League, meanwhile, led a 15-day anti-Semitic tour in Central and South Florida in May 2021, in which the group demonstrated outside Jewish institutions and drove around in a van covered in anti-Semitic slurs. Dominic Di Giorgio, a Port St. Lucie member of the group who helped it establish its online presence, drove five other Florida members on a similar "tour" of southeastern Texas later that year during which Di Giorgio was arrested and charged with using a device that allowed him to flip between two different license plates on his van.

The report notes that 11 Florida members of the Proud Boys were among those arrested in connection with the storming of the Capitol, though the group's then-leader, Enrique Tarrio, of Miami, didn't participate because he had been arrested two days earlier in connection with the burning of a Black Lives Matter banner stolen from a church in Washington.

Tarrio nevertheless faces charges of seditious conspiracy for his alleged role in planning the assault on the Capitol. Tarrio, who has reportedly been a government informant in the past, indicated earlier this year to the Miami New Times that he was stepping down from leadership of the group and would start a new organization. Several members of the Proud Boys hold seats on the Miami-Dade Republican Executive Committee.

	At least seven members of the Oath Keepers arrested in connection with the Jan. 6 attack are Florida residents. A leak of data from the group showed thousands of Florida residents had signed up for the organization, which specifically targets current and former members of the military and law enforcement for membership, though it isn't clear how many of those people are active members and still live in Florida.
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HEADLINE	09/13 Boston: package 'bizarre manifesto'
SOURCE	https://www.msn.com/en-gb/news/world/terrorism-is-a-possibility-after-explosion-at-a-boston-university/ar-AA11NBns?ocid=EMMX
GIST	<p>A package that exploded at Northeastern University, sending a staffer, 45, to hospital with minor injuries to his hand was reportedly in a hard-sided Pelican case and contained a bizarre 'manifesto' railing against the Metaverse and Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg.</p> <p>Northeastern University said the package, which exploded at 7.18 pm on Tuesday night, according to police, had been delivered to campus and detonated after being opened by the male staffer.</p> <p>The package was delivered at about 7pm Tuesday night to Holmes Hall on Leon Street, and was detonated shortly after, authorities told NBC Boston.</p> <p>Northeastern University Police Department tweeted that the building was secured three hours after the incident took place, just before 10pm.</p> <p>Holmes Hall houses the Women's Gender and Sexuality Studies program, the journalism department and the campus Virtual Reality club and immersive media (VR) labs.</p> <p>An anonymous student who is a member of the university's virtual reality club told DailyMail.com that he was disturbed by the incident - though he is unaware of any specific plot to target the organization.</p> <p>He also said that the person who planted the bomb may simply have been 'hurt by an interaction they had' in the immersive digital space.</p> <p>'I think it's possible that, given the loss of in-person communication during quarantine, some people (in the general public, not Northeastern students in particular) may have begun relying on virtual reality for social interaction,' they told DailyMail.com.</p> <p>'We don't know what psychological effects this has yet, it's a very new space.'</p> <p>'It's possible that someone was hurt by an interaction they had in VR and wanted to lash out. But that's just a guess - it seems odd to target Northeastern in particular.'</p> <p>Security expert Todd McGhee, a former Massachusetts State Police trooper, told NBC10 Boston that he expects that investigators will be able to learn information from the device despite the blast.</p> <p>'Even in an explosion, the components of the device do not necessarily disintegrate,' McGhee told NBC10 Boston.</p> <p>'So there will be tangible evidence that will be collected and then, in a sense, reassembled to a point to be able to understand all of the components that were utilized.'</p> <p>Boston police also responded to a report of another suspicious package on Huntington Avenue, in the area of the Museum of Fine Arts. Police later said that was determined to be unfounded.</p> <p>Cambridge police were also called to investigate a suspicious package in the 1100 block of Cambridge Street Tuesday night, but said it was 'an empty, abandoned suitcase'.</p>

The area has been at the center of bomb threats before with the Boston Children's hospital, a five minute drive from Holmes Hall, receiving a bomb threat just two weeks ago.

The threat came after weeks of harassment from rightwing campaigns that have targeted the children's hospital for working with transgender youth.

The Boston Police Department's bomb squad say a search revealed a second similar package that was ultimately rendered safe.

The Boston Bomb Squad, Boston Police, Boston fire and Boston Emergency Medical Services (EMS) responded to the Leon Street incident, shortly after the package detonated, at about 7.20pm.

In a press conference to media Boston Mayor Michelle Wu said she is taking the incident 'very seriously' - but made no mention of any manifesto, which was first reported by WBZ-TV News.

What is the 'Metaverse'?

Led by the Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg, the 'Metaverse' is a set of virtual spaces where you can game, work and communicate with other people who aren't in the same physical space as you.

Users' avatars are able to explore the online world and meet, interact and visit a fast-growing network of virtual locations such as cities, country scenes or cafes.

Landowners can also use their virtual spaces to design experiences for others to enjoy.

Zuckerberg believes the virtual world is the future and launched the Oculus Quest headset, now called the Meta Quest.

Facebook explained: 'You'll be able to hang out with friends, work, play, learn, shop, create and more.

'It's not necessarily about spending more time online — it's about making the time you do spend online more meaningful.'

While Facebook is leading the charge with the metaverse, it explained that it isn't a single product one company can build alone.

'Just like the internet, the metaverse exists whether Facebook is there or not,' it added.

'And it won't be built overnight. Many of these products will only be fully realized in the next 10-15 years.'

'This city is home to everyone's young people, from our littlest learners up to our college students and university staff,' said Mayor Wu.

'So we want to make sure we emphasize that this is of the utmost priority, the safety and well-being of all of our young people here.'

Holmes Hall was evacuated and a notification was sent to the Boston campus at 7.55pm urging people to avoid the area.

Shortly after 8.30 pm, the university notified Northeastern students that evening classes at the Behrakis Health Sciences Center, Shillman Hall, Ryder Hall, Kariotis Hall, Dockser Hall and West Village F are canceled due to the ongoing investigation.

Other universities in the area including The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Harvard also voiced concern.

MIT tweeted: 'MIT Alert: Explosion at Northeastern U. MIT Police are urging all MIT community to be cautious. Please report any suspicious packages.'

Harvard University tweeted: 'Harvard Alert: HUPD is aware of reports of a detonation of a suspicious package at Northeastern.'

'We are working with law enforcement and increasing patrols on Harvard campuses.'

'Out of abundance of caution we urge community members to report anything suspicious to 617-495-1212.'

A 7News reporter speaking to authorities on the ground said the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) are currently coordinating with Boston Police and Terrorism had not been ruled out.

'FBI currently coordinating with Boston Police... Sources say too early to say whether this is related to terrorism or not,' the tweet read.

Boston Police told NBC Boston that the explosion took place on campus at Holmes Hall on Leon Street and the building was evacuated.

Jacob Isaacs who was in class in Holmes Hall during its evacuation told 7News there was some confusion about what had happened when the incident took place.

'We were in class and then we saw two policemen walk through the building and then as soon as we look out the window, we see a fire truck with the lights on blazing,' said Issacs.

'Our teacher is like 'I gotta see what's going on,' and he sees that the fire truck is going and there's a police car outside and as that happened, instantly the fire alarm starts going off.'

Isaacs added that they did not hear anything that sounded like an explosion before they saw first responders arrive.

Investigations into the incident continues with Northeastern University Police Department asking people to 'avoid the area.'

It is still unclear where the package came from as investigations into the matter continue.

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HEADLINE	09/13 Four convicted of assault during Capitol riot
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2022/09/13/tunnel-hodges-jan6-capitol-verdict/
GIST	<p>Four men were convicted Tuesday of assaulting or impeding police officers in some of the most violent attacks in the Jan. 6, 2021, siege at the U.S. Capitol, including a case in which one D.C. officer was pinned to a door and another in which an officer was dragged down steps and beaten with poles and sticks.</p> <p>Three of the men were convicted at a bench trial in front of U.S. District Judge Trevor N. McFadden but had other counts against them dropped, making McFadden the first federal judge in Washington to acquit members of the mob of felony charges. He found that while all three battled police, only one was clearly intending to obstruct Congress as it met to confirm President Biden's election victory.</p> <p>In a separate case, a fourth man pleaded guilty to assault.</p> <p>The Lower West Terrace of the Capitol was the site of some of the worst violence on Jan. 6, as police dug in against the mob unaware that other Capitol entrances were already breached. Officers testified at trial about a slow and steady advance of rioters that they managed to thwart at heavy cost over 2½ hours. They suffered bruises, concussions and fractured bones; one was forced into medical retirement.</p>

Patrick E. McCaughey III of Ridgefield, Conn., used a riot shield to pin D.C. police officer Daniel Hodges to the tunnel door, McFadden found, and hit another officer in the hand. Tristan C. Stevens of Pensacola, Fla., tried to engage the group in coordinated pushes, and personally shoved Capitol Police Sgt. Aquilino Gonell with another riot shield. David Mehaffie of Kettering, Ohio, directed members of the mob in and out of the tunnel.

All three argued that they were merely trapped between violent protesters and police, an argument McFadden dismissed as “implausible.”

The defendants “knew what was happening,” he said, and were part of “shocking violence ... no police officer should have had to endure.”

Separately on Tuesday, Jack Wade Whitton of Locust Grove, Ga., pleaded guilty before U.S. District Judge Emmet G. Sullivan to assaulting police with a dangerous weapon at the same Capitol entrance about an hour later. He admitted to throwing kicks, punches and objects, telling police, “You’re going to die tonight,” and dragging a D.C. officer identified as B.M. down the stairs to be beaten by other rioters.

Whitton, 32, faces a statutory maximum penalty of 20 years in prison at sentencing on March 6 before Sullivan, or roughly five to eight years based on federal sentencing guidelines as set in a plea agreement.

In the case of the three who faced trial, McFadden agreed that McCaughey, 25, used a riot shield as a dangerous weapon against Hodges, causing “significant pain and large bruises.” But he found that in other attacks on police, McCaughey and Stevens used the shields in ways that could not cause severe harm.

“I do not believe that a shield is inherently a dangerous weapon,” he said. McFadden said he did not find support for Gonell’s testimony that Stevens, 26, also attacked with a police baton.

Gonell’s and Hodges’s testimony was “more that of victims than typical law enforcement,” McFadden said, potentially colored by their “understandable anger and resentment” toward the rioters. But he said he believed that any inaccurate recollections by the officers were unintentional, and that their testimony was largely supported by video evidence.

McCaughey and Mehaffie, on the other hand, both “shaded their testimony” to help themselves “more ... than the facts allowed,” McFadden found.

Testifying in his own defense, Mehaffie, 63, said he was shoved into police lines by the crushing force of the crowd, shouted “Don’t hurt the police!” and had to fight his way back out of the tunnel. On video, he can be heard shouting, “Push! Push! Don’t throw things!” He said he was trying to control conflict as the crowd advanced and play a negotiating role, telling police, “If we don’t push, you won’t push.”

There was “no negotiation,” D.C. police officer Abdulkadir Abdi testified earlier. “Their objective was to get into the Capitol and we were pretty much in their way.”

Mehaffie struggled to explain why, if his goal was to avoid confrontation, he pounded on the glass doors, told other rioters they had to scale the walls for “battle,” helped pass a riot shield forward and remained in the tunnel.

“I don’t know that I had any expectation except to keep moving,” he testified.

McCaughey testified that he backed off when Hodges began screaming, showing that he had no desire to cause harm. McFadden said Hodges’s “gut-wrenching cries of pain” appeared to have inspired a “moment of humanity” in McCaughey but that his prior actions “cannot be undone by his subsequent kindness.”

The judge found that only McCaughey was trying to stop the counting of votes, based on comments he made to friends and to police, while Mehaffie and Stevens’s reasons for trying to get into the Capitol were unclear. Prosecutors argued that their intent could be inferred from their aggression.

	<p>“They were absolutely determined to get inside the U.S. Capitol building that day, no matter what stood in front of them,” Assistant U.S. Attorney Jocelyn Bond said in closing arguments at the bench trial. “They put their words behind it, they put their actions behind it.”</p> <p>Stevens did not testify; his attorney Lauren Cobb argued in closing that he used the riot shield to protect himself from police batons. He only “bopped” an officer with it when pushed from behind, she said.</p> <p>“The only plausible explanation” for Steven’s behavior, which included cursing and spitting at officers, was that he wanted to join the attack, the judge said.</p> <p>McFadden said that there was less evidence of intent to disrupt Congress in this case than in previous Jan. 6 trials he has overseen. But he was also skeptical of defense claims that the three men only wanted to voice opinions. “They’ve been demonstrating outside. They’ve been demonstrating all day. Why go to such efforts, why hurt multiple officers just to go in and demonstrate inside? It doesn’t pass the laugh test,” he said.</p> <p>McFadden noted that two officers testified that they were more hesitant to use force at the Capitol on Jan. 6 because of the Black Lives Matter movement and the previous summer’s racial justice demonstrations. The judge, however, directed blame at political leaders as well as the rioters, opining that the trial showed “the chaos and violence that can occur when senior government leaders fail to support law enforcement officers,” and suggesting that police should have been more aggressive and had more support on Jan. 6.</p> <p>McCaughey, Mehaffie and Stevens will be sentenced in January and face many possible penalties.</p> <p>McCaughey was taken into custody after the verdict; McFadden said that after his “incredible” testimony, “I frankly don’t trust that he would return for sentencing.”</p>
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HEADLINE	09/13 Vancouver mayor house targeted by arson
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3633559/vancouver-mayors-house-targeted-by-arson-say-police/
GIST	<p>On Monday night, police in Vancouver responded to reports of arson at the home of the city’s mayor.</p> <p>According to the Vancouver Police Department, officers were called out at about 9:40 p.m. to the home of Mayor Anne McEnerny-Ogle and her husband, Terry Ogle, in the 3500 block of F Street.</p> <p>Terry Ogle reportedly confronted the suspect who was trying to start a fire near the home’s garage while the mayor was gone at a city council meeting at the time.</p> <p>Police tried to find the suspect with a K-9 team but could not locate anyone.</p> <p>This is not an isolated incident, according to McEnerny-Ogle, saying earlier that day, her husband was repairing their back door after a break-in Sunday night.</p> <p>“This happens to elected officials all over the place. Whether you’re in Hillsboro, Portland, Gresham, or Vancouver. All of our city council members have had threats throughout the many years. Whenever you make a decision, you usually upset at least one person,” McEnerny-Ogle said in an interview with KOMO news.</p> <p>The Vancouver Police Department and the Vancouver Fire Marshal’s Office are investigating.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/13 Canada: deadly rampage after cop-killing
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/13/canada-deadly-rampage-toronto-police-officer

GIST	<p>A Toronto police officer was shot dead in an unprovoked “ambush” before a gunman killed another man and left three others with serious injuries in a deadly rampage on Monday afternoon. The suspect was later killed in a cemetery following a standoff with police.</p> <p>The attacks began around 2pm on Monday, at a Tim Hortons restaurant in the city of Mississauga, west of Toronto. Constable Andrew Hong, a 48-year-old traffic services officer, was on his lunch break from a joint training exercise when he was shot and killed at close range by the gunman. Another person was shot and left with “life-altering” injuries.</p> <p>The suspect then fled in a black Jeep, leading police on a pursuit that spanned three communities.</p> <p>An emergency alert was sent to residents, warning of an “active shooter, armed and dangerous”.</p> <p>Later in the afternoon, another shooting was reported in the city of Milton. Shakeel Ashraf, the owner of an auto repair shop in Milton where the suspect was an employee, was killed and two others were injured.</p> <p>Police eventually tracked the suspect to a cemetery in the city of Hamilton, where he was killed following a standoff.</p> <p>Hong, a 22-year veteran of the Toronto police, is survived by his wife, two children and parents.</p> <p>“This is devastating news for his family and for all members of the Toronto police service and our entire policing community. We will lean on each other while we work to support Constable Hong’s family, and each other, in our grief,” said Toronto’s interim police chief, James Ramer.</p> <p>A procession of police vehicles, including SUVs and motorcycles, escorted Hong’s body from the scene of the shooting. A line of officers saluted the vehicles as they drove past.</p> <p>“May Constable Andrew Hong rest in peace. A husband, father and hero, he and his loved ones are in my prayers,” tweeted the Ontario premier, Doug Ford.</p> <p>Toronto’s mayor, John Tory, who called Hong a “gentle giant”, ordered flags to remain at half-mast at Toronto city hall, civic centres and other city locations.</p> <p>“[Hong] was somebody that meant a lot to [other officers]” said Tory. “This is one of those kinds of things that just breaks your heart.”</p> <p>The province’s police watchdog, the Special Investigations Unit, says it is investigating the fatal shooting at the cemetery.</p> <p>“There is a lot to go through in the cemetery,” Kristy Denette, a spokesperson for the SIU, told reporters. “It’s not clear which firearm led to the death of the suspect ... [and it is] unclear whether the person was armed and shots were exchanged.”</p>
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HEADLINE	09/13 Argentina 3rd arrest assassination attempt
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/13/argentina-vice-president-assassination-attempt-third-arrest
GIST	<p>A third suspect has been arrested over the attempted assassination of Argentina’s vice-president, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, as investigators pursue suspicions that the attack was not the act of a lone gunman.</p> <p>Fernández was unharmed during the incident on 1 September, when Fernando Andrés Sabag Montiel, 35, pulled the trigger of his handgun inches away from her face. The gun failed to fire, and the vice-president’s supporters quickly subdued the would-be assassin.</p> <p>Sabag Montiel’s girlfriend, Brenda Uliarte, who was also present at the scene, was arrested a few hours later.</p>

On Tuesday, Agustina Díaz, a friend of the couple, was arrested, reportedly after a forensic examination of Uliarte's cellphone revealed messages between her, Sabag Montiel and Díaz regarding the attack.

Other cellphones were seized by police Tuesday in at least three more raids in the city of Buenos Aires and the greater Buenos Aires area.

The dramatic moment at which the gun failed to fire was caught live on video by followers who have been gathering regularly outside Fernández de Kirchner's home in Buenos Aires to express their support after she was charged with a number of corruption offenses.

Uliarte's cellphone also reportedly revealed a possible previous attempt on the vice-president on the night of 27 August, when Fernández de Kirchner addressed supporters from a makeshift stage before returning to her apartment.

"It's too late now, it's midnight," Sabag Montiel said in a message to Uliarte. "She's upstairs but I don't think she'll come out [again], so that's it, let's leave it."

"We have to start going into action," Uliarte said in another message, "let's put a molotov [cocktail] in the Casa Rosada [Argentina's presidential palace]."

Investigators have also reportedly found video on Sabag Montiel's cellphone in which he is seen practicing with the Bersa handgun he used in the attempted attack.

None of the three suspects has yet been formally charged or entered a plea.

Sabag Montiel and Uliarte are expected to be charged in court this week with attempted homicide.

President Albert Fernández (who is not related to the vice-president) said on Tuesday that messages on the seized cellphones also pointed to an assassination plot against him as well. "The conversations of the accused are becoming known and they said that I would be next," he said.

Fernández de Kirchner is fervently loved by her supporters, followers of the Peronist legacy of three-time president Juan Perón and his wife, Evita. But she is reviled by anti-Peronists who accuse her of corruption during her two terms as president in 2007-2015.

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HEADLINE	09/13 Downtown Seattle shooting: 1 injured
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/1-injured-downtown-seattle-shooting/KDMO34FADRBWVDII7CSLCBQWQQ/
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — An investigation is underway after a person was injured in a shooting Tuesday night in downtown Seattle.</p> <p>Officers were called near 4th Avenue and Wall Street for a report of a shooting.</p> <p>Police did not provide information on the extent of the victim's injury.</p> <p>Neither has information been released on what led up to the shooting or if a suspect has been taken into custody.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/14 Chicago shooting: 1 dead, 6 injured
SOURCE	https://www.foxnews.com/us/chicago-shooting-leaves-multiple-injured-police
GIST	Multiple people were shot following an altercation in Chicago on Tuesday, leaving one dead and at least six people injured, authorities said.

	<p>The shooting took place in Washington Park, near a baseball game, after two groups of individuals had an "apparent altercation," Chicago Police Department spokesman Tom Ahern said.</p> <p>At least four people were taken to the University of Chicago Medical Center, including three people who were in critical condition, Fox 32 reported. One person died from their injuries, police said.</p> <p>The Chicago Police Department dispatched multiple officers to the 5500 block of South Martin Luther King Drive near Washington Park, authorities told Fox News, and videos from the scene show police vehicles parked on the grass, adjacent to the baseball field.</p> <p>Chicago Police Department Deputy Chief Fred Melean said the victims were all adults.</p> <p>The shooting came as the city continues to experience a crime wave. A recent disturbing video shows a woman in Chicago's North Side screaming while being tackled and robbed at gunpoint.</p> <p>The city also marked its 500th homicide for the year earlier this week after a 28-year-old was killed leaving his mother's home, Fox 32 reported.</p> <p>Despite the jarring homicide pace — over two per day — the number of shootings and murders are down from the same point last year, according to the Cook County medical examiner's office.</p> <p>Fox 32 reported there were 591 homicides at the same point last year and around 550 homicides at the same point in 2020.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/13 Boston: package detonates at university
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/boston-ems-responds-reported-explosion-person-injured/story?id=89852768
GIST	<p>A package detonated at Northeastern University in Boston on Tuesday night, and a staff member sustained a minor hand injury, according to the school and police.</p> <p>The package was sent to Holmes Hall on Leon Street, where police responded at 7:18 p.m., authorities said. Boston Police Superintendent Felipe Colon said there was a second similar package that was rendered safe by the bomb squad.</p> <p>Law enforcement's preliminary assessment is that the minor explosion on campus was not random, two sources briefed told ABC News.</p> <p>Boston EMS had responded to the explosion at the university, with the 45-year-old victim transported to an area hospital with non-life-threatening injuries, according to police and officials.</p> <p>In a statement to Boston ABC affiliate WCVB, Northeastern University said a package delivered to Holmes Hall "detonated when a staff member opened it."</p> <p>A second suspicious package was cleared and did not contain an explosive, according to the two sources. There have been a number of reports of suspicious packages that police have checked, and they've searched buildings and mail rooms at Northeastern and nearby colleges for similar-looking packages, the sources said.</p> <p>Boston Police Commissioner Michael Cox said a number of campus buildings were evacuated. He urged citizens to come forward if they see something out of the ordinary.</p> <p>"We're trying to gather facts now," Colon added.</p> <p>Police arrived on the scene around 7:16 p.m. and evacuated the building, authorities told ABC News.</p>

	<p>"The building has been evacuated and a notification was sent to the Boston campus at 7:55 p.m. urging people to avoid the area. We will update members of the Northeastern community when more information is available," the university added in its statement.</p> <p>Police for Northeastern University urged people to avoid areas around the school's Holmes Hall as they conduct an investigation into the incident.</p> <p>The Boston Police Department's bomb squad, Boston EMS and the Boston Fire Department were all on the scene investigating the incident, officials said. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives is assisting with the investigation, according to a spokesperson.</p> <p>Northeastern is a private research university located in Boston.</p>
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